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ABSTRACT

The call to restructure schools is born from a new set of challenges facing U.S. society as well as its education system. This paper describes the process followed by 12 schools that participated in meeting the challenges in the "Schools of Tomorrow...Today" (ST/T) project, supported by the New York City Teacher Centers Consortium (TCC) of the United Federation of Teachers. The project was intended to be a means for changing communications among the staff and parents at schools, changing school-site governance, and being a mobilizing force to improve the education of children. The TCC selected 12 schools from 135 that responded for a place in the project. Each school set up a ST/T team and in the spring and summer of 1990 TCC researchers were able to observe the process of restructuring firsthand. Each school is described, and the context gives demographic data and general information pertaining to the school's unique circumstance. The focus of the ST/T project in the school is then outlined, followed by the learning experiences, barriers, ongoing problems, and dilemmas faced. Each case study concludes with identified needs. In addition, some case studies report on the effects of the restructuring effort. (RR)

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Case Studies

Early Lessons in Restructuring Schools: Case Studies of Schools of Tomorrow...Today

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Early Lessons in Restructuring Schools:
Case Studies of Schools
of Tomorrow...Today

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Edited by Diane Harrington

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--August, 1991

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Introduction

Restructuring schools has become a rallying cry among educators and others who are concerned about America's investment in its future. For those involved in its pursuit, restructuring aims to create schools that are more centered on learners' needs for active, experiential, cooperative, and culturally-connected learning opportunities supportive of individual talents and learning styles. Restructurers aim to create these learning opportunities within school organizations energized by collaborative inquiry, informed by authentic accountability, and guided by shared decision making. More than a buzzword or another call for overnight change, restructuring offers real hope, and a significant challenge, to all those who worry and care about the next generation.

The call to restructure schools is born from a new set of challenges facing our society as well as its education system. While today's schools are geared to uniformity, passivity, and order, massive changes in our world call out for diversity, initiative, and inventiveness. As many reform reports have pointed out, our increasingly information-based society requires working citizens who are able to frame problems, pose solutions, and adapt continuously to changing needs (Carnegie Forum, 1986; National Science Board, 1983; National Governors' Association, 1986).

But schoolpeople are struggling in organizations invented for "batch processing" students in assembly line fashion to prepare them for low-level tests of basic skills -- and often failing even at that (Darling-Hammond, 1990). In addition, changed social conditions, particularly increased poverty, ethnic diversity, and declining institutional and neighborhood support for children, are placing pressures on schools to embrace a far different and more proactive stance toward their communities.

The challenge, then, is to develop an enriched and individually responsive vision of schooling for a more diverse population while, at the same time, incorporating a broader view of the school's social role and an enlarged conception of the community responsible for education. This challenge demands new ways of working in an institution that has historically been difficult to change. It requires visionary perspectives from schoolpeople who are using new models of collaborative work to reinvent the places they have previously known only as bureaucracies run by hierarchical decision making. The 12 schools[1] whose case studies follow accepted this challenge.

These schools all participated in the Schools of Tomorrow...Today (ST/T) project, which was carefully planned and well supported by the New York City Teacher Centers

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[1] All school names are fictitious.

Consortium (TCC) of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). The project was intended to be, first, a means for changing communications among the staff and parents at participating schools. Such change is necessary if people are to develop the trust and energy needed to undertake great changes amidst great problems. Second, it was intended to be a means for changing school-site governance, because such changes are required if available energy is to be focused on concrete, achievable ends. Third, it was intended to be a mobilizing force to improve the education of children, school by school, because such improvement is the best and only justification for the demanding efforts of innovation.

After over a year of planning, TCC invited all the public schools in New York City to apply for a place in the project; 135 responded, and 12 were selected. In 1988, each of these 12 schools set up an ST/T team which engaged in training and developed a shared decision-making (SDM) process at the school. Each team was made up of the principal (or an assistant principal in some cases), the UFT chapter leader, a number of teachers chosen by, volunteering for, or elected to the team, and, in some cases, one or more parents, plus two or three facilitators trained and assigned by TCC.

In some schools, the principal and chapter leader hand-picked most of the team members and asked them to volunteer. In others, team members were elected by representative constituencies (grade level teachers and specialists in elementary schools, for example). In at least one school the opportunity to serve on the team was simply announced, and everyone who volunteered was given a place. All teams had open meetings and took steps to publish their proceedings and publicize their efforts, and in many cases teachers who had not been part of the original team learned what was going on and took steps to get elected or appointed to team membership. Similarly, a team member might have tired and left the team, or moved to a different school, and a frequent observer might have slid from observation into subcommittee work and thus into full membership. Or a team made up of volunteers and appointed members might have decided that the time had come to reconfigure the team by standing for election. Membership, though broadly reflective of schoolwide and systemwide staff demographics, was never entirely static.

The facilitators who guided the teams were TCC teacher specialists with many years of experience in both teaching and staff development who had volunteered for a role in the ST/T project. Their task was to provide both consultation and assistance to the teams. The facilitators themselves saw their first job as the difficult one of "working to maintain a neutral presence" while at the same time providing assistance to the school teams. Their work entailed helping the team develop a vision and an action plan for the school; introducing a variety of process tools -- approaches to and means of handling such tasks as running meetings, sharing decisions, developing ideas into plans, and resolving conflicts; encouraging the team to work with the whole school so that decisions were reached somewhat collaboratively among the faculty and were not left to the committee alone; intervening in discussions to keep the process moving, sometimes by acting to resolve problems, and sometimes by raising them; providing suggestions or resources (such as materials or speakers) when needed.

Once formed, each team went through a series of six Saturday training sessions and an overnight retreat, which were used to introduce them to a number of goal-setting, decision-making, and group maintenance techniques. Most teams -- not all -- took to the process wholeheartedly. Most decided, or began to decide, how they wanted to work together, welcomed the new skills, and looked back on the training with warmth and gratitude. "The facilitators were able to give us insights we never had thought of before. They also helped us to be professional, to keep on track with our goals," said a member of one school team.

Part of the first-year training included the opportunity to identify a mission, select goals, and consider some possible projects, and most teams did so. Many teams then extended this process by including the whole staff in a needs census that was used to determine their initial project. Some teams did not ask the staff to generate a "want list," but instead selected projects on their own. Generally, they sought approval of these projects by the staff before beginning to implement them; they had a sense, therefore, that they were expressing a mandate and not simply their own thoughts as to what would be good for the school. Most of those teams saw their projects welcomed and their efforts appreciated. Teams that paid less attention to communication risked seeing their projects rejected and themselves dismissed as "elitist."

During the spring and summer of 1990, researchers from the Center for School Reform at Teachers College, Columbia University, conducted a set of interviews and observations documenting the ST/T project, then finishing its second year. This work entailed visits at the school sites, examination of relevant documents, and interviews with selected team members from each school, the team facilitators, and the TCC director. It afforded us a rare opportunity to observe the process of restructuring firsthand. Not all projects were of equal scope, not all were fully implemented at the time of our evaluation, and, of course, not all were equally successful. The cases show the difficult and rewarding work being undertaken by the participating schools. Particular problems and the strategies taken to overcome them, particular successes and the factors contributing to them, are taken up in ***Early Lessons***, published separately[2].

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[2] Lieberman A., Darling-Hammond, L., and Zuckerman, D. (1991) ***Early Lessons in Restructuring Schools***. New York: National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching.

Stephen Day High School
Manhattan

Context

Stephen Day High School rose like a cruise ship out of its midtown-west block of battered three and four-story brownstones. The streets were clean but heavily used, and some buildings were tightly boarded up, empty if not abandoned. The school's construction of tan brick was standard-modern institutional, but the sweeping curve of its six-story front was decidedly better than the cereal-box shape of most institutional architecture.

Before school began, food and drink vendors and 1200 students added noise and color to the street. (This represented 80% attendance of the 1600 students enrolled: 55% black, 44% Hispanic; 50% below the poverty line; from 137 schools in all five boroughs.) Inside the school door, about 25 or 30 security guards kept order and signed the kids in. Searches for weapons with portable metal detectors were part of the crowded, noisy routine, but the atmosphere was friendly if intense. Later, when the crowds had thinned, the guards were smiling, and their contact with latecomers was relaxed and personal. The school was safe, a good place to be during difficult times in New York City, and staff morale was said to be exceptionally high: "We're a family. The kids are good but not sophisticated and we have no drug problem at all. No teacher ever tries to transfer out."

But Stephen Day had had some hard times in the last 15 years. Started under the wing of the printers' union as the New York School of Printing, it had always been blessed with a special relationship with the union's Educational Advisory Commission, always staffed itself with retiring printers, always been selective in its admissions, and always offered a job to every graduate. But the electronic revolution of the last 10 years had devastated the traditional printing trade, the Board of Education had pressed for fewer vocational offerings, and new regulations had prohibited selective admission. In contrast with its past, the school found itself burdened by entering students who weren't sure why they were there, who drifted through the curriculum without focus or direction, and who dropped out in unsatisfactory numbers. Moreover, the scope and sequence of the curriculum was structured for an earlier generation of kids who had entered with a vocation already in mind, and it was therefore unsuitable for those now entering. On top of that, the climate at board headquarters was unsympathetic: "We felt we were in danger of losing our school. Morale was terrible," recalled one staff member.

The ST/T committee found itself ready to deal with these problems.

Focus of the ST/T Project

As the chapter leader remembered it, in 1988 she had received a letter from the Teacher Centers Consortium stating that training resources were available for schools considering making use of School-Based Options[3] to develop their own programs. The chapter leader, a shop teacher, and the assistant principal for administration went to an orientation meeting and were completely sold by Myrna Cooper's speech on the ST/T process: on the necessity of finding their vision for their school and the opportunity to define their mission, decide where they wanted to be in 10 years, and influence that destiny.

This threesome then took the choice back to the faculty; 93% voted in favor of moving ahead with the idea. Twelve people, representing all areas of the school, volunteered to be on the committee, knowing there would be no new resources for the school beyond the training they would receive and no compensation for their extra work.

With the help of a needs census, the committee developed a proposal involving four projects: (1) holding a schoolwide counseling and orientation day during Regents week "for the purposes of evaluating the students' programming needs, involving parents in the programming process, and familiarizing both students and parents with the unique offerings of our school;" (2) establishing a Blue Ribbon Committee "to redesign current programming procedures so as to accommodate the appropriate scope and sequence of course offerings;" (3) redesigning teacher schedules so that a lunchtime activities program could be established under teacher supervision for the benefit of those kids who either did not want to spend lunchtime in the cafeteria or who could not stay after school for activities; and (4) upgrading the collegial assistance program so that more teachers requesting such services could call on experienced teachers to help them with their work. These proposals were put to a vote of the faculty as a whole and all were adopted, none with less than an 88% acceptance rate.

All four projects were implemented, although the Blue Ribbon Committee's recommendations for redesigning the ninth grade program were delayed due to lack of funds, later found. All were considered quite successful; when the faculty voted to join school-based management/shared decision making (SBM/SDM), 45 teachers out of 100 volunteered to participate.

Not all the faculty favored the Blue Ribbon Committee's plan to extend its curriculum reform to all four grades, as one team member noted: "It requires everyone to reevaluate their positions, and if you oppose the plan you have to say why. That's upsetting and irritating to some people." And there was predictable resistance from an "old guard" of

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[3]The School-Based Option was a clause first included in the 1987-90 New York City Teachers' Contract. If 75 percent of the UFT chapter voted for it, a school could propose to set aside for a year certain regulations or contract provisions. The proposal then had to be approved by the principal, superintendent, and chancellor, and by the UFT district representative and president.

trade-based union members who had supervisory positions on the faculty. Nevertheless, the design and implementation of a new scope and sequence for entering students in order to better meet their needs, according to the professional opinions of the staff on site and *because of* the professional opinions of the staff on site, was an impressive accomplishment.

However, despite their pride in this accomplishment, the team's strongest positive feelings were reserved for the Regents week counseling and orientation program they put on: "We were no longer allowed to choose our kids, but we could make them *feel* like they were being chosen, and we could teach them about the school and ease their entry," said one team member.

Until that day, the faculty had been somewhat demoralized; after that day, there was an end to staff talk of "That's not my job," and a beginning to people saying, "What can I do to help?" Regents day saw the assistant principal in the kitchen flipping hamburgers because no one had anticipated the number of kids and parents who showed up. Regents day showed everyone in the school pulling together to accomplish a goal they had chosen, through methods they had designed. The ST/T team had led the school to take some control of its destiny, and the effort paid off. As one member put it: "We're dying now because there's *just no time* to handle all our regular duties and responsibilities as well as these new ones -- but we're dying with smiles on our faces."

What Are You Learning?

Some things, as always, were learned the hard way. At first, for example, the team was extremely task-oriented and drove hard to make decisions even if some members objected. Further, when their facilitator pointed this out and spoke of the potential costs, the team decided he was just against them and went ahead anyway. "Finally, we hit a wall and crashed: there was a 50/50 split on some decision, no one would give any ground, and everyone was just fighting. So we had a good workout and then allowed the facilitator to teach us," one member recalled. The team eventually learned how to manage disagreement and even conflict without shutting anyone down, how to foster consensus, and how to make decisions without creating "sleeping crises" that would explode later.

But similar, though less dramatic, problems occurred when it came time to bring new members on the team. "We made a major mistake. We had a group which was moving fast toward a common goal and we failed to bring the new members in in the right way, failed to bring them up to speed," said one member. So again there was friction and a breakdown of orderly group process. And again there was learning about how to handle process while working together toward common goals.

Finally, as one member put it, "We're pretty good at fighting -- and at working together. The Teacher Center has taught us to be more process-oriented but we're not always as under control as we should be. The facilitators are good, and good for us. We'll go at it together but everyone is basically friendly and no one is put off by the fighting."

Beyond such gains from raw experience, the assistant principal for administration noted that he was learning to let others do and learn: "There's a tremendous amount of talent in this school, and ST/T allowed people to really exercise their abilities and become a working team." The chapter leader agreed: "We went into this because we needed to save the school, not because we bought the process entirely. *Now*, we've bought it -- there's so much more talent and willingness than I knew was there."

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

Not that there weren't problems attendant to this success. A swelling committee membership, for example, led to scheduling problems for meetings. The committee was still seeking to have as many people as possible participate in the restructuring process, but as an unintended result they were faced with the choice of meeting less often or making some decisions with too many people absent, leading to a lack of consensus when some members felt left out. Some people felt that the committee should be restricted in size, but others continued to believe that membership should remain open. The problem of how best to handle conflicting goals, like the problem of insufficient time to handle the many tasks that needed to be done, was likely to remain with them; most arguments within the group were about how time should best be spent.

Money was a related problem. Some felt that more money should have been earmarked for stipends for those who managed to fit committee meetings into their already crowded weekly schedules. Most committee members felt that they would volunteer their time for restructuring whether they received remuneration or not. And there were 16 different lunchtime activities all requesting funds from the committee; no one disagreed with the difficulty of giving them all the financial support they wanted and deserved.

There were also conflicts due to change. Some complained that the facilitators, not the participants, set the times for meetings, and that they were less available in the second year. Further, for many there was a tension between the original members, who felt hampered by the slower pace of the new members and spoke of how efficiently they had been able to function during the first year of the restructuring program; and the new, second-year members, who said that the "older" participants took too much authority.

Finally, there was no avoiding the fact that shared decision making was in some ways an irreducibly difficult task. Team members suffered conflicts of politics and personality, and subcommittee chairs felt victimized as they became lightning rods for conflict between opposing factions.

What More Is Needed?

There appeared to be a consensus among the members that the committee needed to

be reorganized. In particular, if the decision was made to continue unlimited membership then some organizational procedure needed to be developed for the dissemination of information among those committee members not able to be present for a given meeting. Second, additional time and funds were generally considered the primary needs of the committee, as one member specified: "We need resources without so many strings." Third, the members recognized that parental participation was totally lacking in their program -- there was not even a parents' association -- and saw a need to develop ways to educate the parents about school restructuring and enlist their participation. This was certain to be a difficult task since the parents lived in all five boroughs and few wished to come into midtown Manhattan at night.

Nevertheless, said one team member, "We now feel we are part of a larger movement. We've been invited to speak to other schools and there's a feeling that educational reform is really coming. It's exciting."

Delancy Street Preparatory High School
Manhattan

Context

The Delancy Street Preparatory High School took up one and a half floors of the Valle Marta Junior High School. It was located among tenements and small neighborhood stores on bustling streets two blocks from the Delancy Street subway station on Stanton Street, names made famous by the huge Jewish immigration of a century ago.

The school was emblematic of more recent migrations: 35% of the students were black and Hispanic, more than 50% were the children of recent Asian immigrants, and 80% of the school's enrollment was judged "limited English proficient" (LEP)[4]. In fact, Delancy Street Prep was designated a magnet alternative school[5] for LEP students who were overage for their grade and had been discharged or discouraged by regular high schools. Those interviewed wished to make it very clear, however, that their school offered a traditional and demanding program as well as paying attention to the particular affective needs of its special students.

Focus of the ST/T Project

Delancy Street Prep formed an ST/T team consisting of teacher representatives from each department, the chapter leader, the assistant principal of administration, and the principal; attended a series of Saturday trainings in team organization and restructuring strategies; and developed a set of goals for restructuring. Among these were developing alternative modes of collegial interaction for teachers, including mentoring, peer intervention, and coaching; rescheduling the school in order to provide time for staff development, interdisciplinary teaching, curriculum development, and one-on-one instruction; and encouraging a move toward greater team management and shared leadership of the high school as a whole. To help them move forward more rapidly, three task forces were formed to focus on the stated goals of the restructuring effort: academic success, professionalism, and student life and discipline. Both the task forces and the ST/T committee met at least weekly.

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[4]Students are judged "limited English proficient" if they fail to score above a state-designated cutoff point on an English language test. This status entitles them to special instruction (either bilingual or English as a second language) in order to improve their skills in English.

[5]In New York City, alternative high schools are defined by their population rather than by their nontraditional approach to instruction. The NYC public alternative high schools serve "at-risk" students who have left or were failing in regular high schools.

The team led the staff to two notable successes. First, starting with the spring 1989 term, the school schedule was changed to allow brief, optional meetings ("convenings") at the beginning of every school day for the whole staff, and, on Wednesday afternoons, a schedule consisting of an hour each for student activities and student mentoring, and an hour and a half for restructuring meetings. Most important, said the staff, at the same time they adopted a modular schedule, providing the opportunity for longer instructional periods as needed. Second, partly because of the time and access made available through rescheduling, the team was highly successful in involving the school as a whole in the restructuring effort. Task force meetings were often attended not just by members of the ST/T committee, but by the entire staff.

In addition, ongoing staff development workshops to support restructuring goals were held concerning the implementation of a broad spectrum of new initiatives: the family groups program (giving teachers ongoing responsibility for a small group of students), interdisciplinary education, curriculum development, house plans (creating smaller schools within the school), student activities, and alternative methods of teacher evaluation (called Collaborative Assessment of Teaching Skills, or CATS, by the Delancy Street staff).

Effects of the Restructuring Effort

A common theme was that the ST/T effort had allowed them the freedom to have an effect on their school, and, through that, on their own futures. Nevertheless, some saw a risk in extending and formalizing their efforts through the Chancellor's SBM/SDM initiative. Perhaps they only feared the unknown, but they were concerned about taking on what they saw as a quasi-administrative function more likely to bring them blame for the school's problems than the resources to solve them.

What Are You Learning?

First of all, the committee wished to emphasize that they were *still* learning, that restructuring was not something accomplished overnight, and that new concerns were still being identified. They stated as a goal that their task was not to fit their school to a particular model of restructuring developed elsewhere but to use the process of restructuring to meet their school's particular needs. More concretely, they noted that they had discovered a way to incorporate the whole staff in the process in a short period of time, a hurdle for every school attempting restructuring.

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

The biggest problem was the knowledge gap between team members and the general faculty, who lacked both team skills and information about current and past restructuring processes and products. As a result, the team had to overcome a significant degree of

skepticism among a large minority of the staff regarding the long-term impact of such a comprehensive effort.

Second, there were *insufficient resources,* particularly of funds and time, to support the efforts to change key elements of practice such as instructional techniques. Some members pointed out, for example, that even though the schedule change had created times for meetings during the school day, individual schedules were still packed. They found it difficult to do their restructuring work, plan lessons, experiment with new techniques, engage in professional dialogue, and participate in student activities.

Third there were *ongoing differences of opinion.* Although such differences were taken in stride, some still thought that others were participating due to private agendas beyond the team's mission.

Finally, although some team members saw no need to involve parents in their restructuring process, others did, and identified the difficulty of reaching parents in homes in which, for cultural reasons, any communication at all from the school may be taken to mean that something is wrong.

What More Is Needed?

There was a need to broaden participation on the leadership team, a need to understand more fully the role of an SBM/SDM committee in running a school, and a need to evaluate changes made through restructuring.

Also needed were more time, as noted above; more training, particularly to develop a better method to reach internal consensus on restructuring issues; more funds, particularly to support the reorganization of the school into houses. And, of course, more support and encouragement were needed, both for committee participation and for broader efforts to reduce teacher isolation so that students could more readily connect one body of knowledge with another.

A Better Chance (ABC) High School
Brooklyn

Context

A Better Chance (ABC) High School stood tall and imposing amid the quiet streets of Brownsville, Brooklyn. Many of the surrounding dwellings were drab one and two-story houses built by the public housing department. A majority of the private homes were in disrepair, and the side streets were cratered with pot holes. Stores on the main streets seemed to earn a profit, but many storefronts on the side streets were boarded up.

Compared with other high schools, this one seemed tranquil and nearly monastic with its empty halls and clean floors. Students drifted from class to class individually or in small groups, there were no bells, and on a beautiful spring day it seemed as though only about half of the 500 students assigned to the school were present. Aged 17 to 21, 88 percent black and 12 percent Hispanic, they had come to this alternative school after dropping out of other schools in Brooklyn. Many of the girls were teenaged mothers. The principal lamented that although the school already had a large day care center with four rooms taking care of 40 infants, "I could have 10 rooms and have them all filled."

The principal as well as her teachers often talked of their students with affection and hope. "They are needy, but they are terrific," said one. During an interview with the principal in her office, a young woman of 16 or 17 wandered in and the principal stopped for a few minutes in order to talk with her. The girl complained of a vague backache. The principal listened sympathetically until the girl seemed satisfied that her problem had been acknowledged; then she went on her way. "I don't think her back really hurts," the principal confided. "She just needs someone to talk to now and then." It was that kind of school.

Focus of the ST/T Project

A determination to help their students was evident in the ST/T team's decision to focus on "student empowerment." There were a variety of explanations about this concept, but it seemed to be grounded in the twin beliefs that the students should participate as much as possible in their own education, and that the esprit de corps of the teachers would improve as they empowered not only their students but themselves.

However, the actual accomplishments of the ST/T committee -- playfully dubbed the "Dream Team" by some members -- were disappointing. It appeared that the group's progress was hampered by factionalism over whether activities should be carefully devised or should be carried out without extensive planning. "I got worried that we would stay in the

idea stage forever," said one member who felt the need to see concrete results sooner.

But the dispute between those favoring careful decision making and those urging a push to meaningful action went deeper, to a basic disagreement over how best to lead the students. One faction, according to one description, wanted to dictate "in the fashion of a catechism" the standards to which the students should measure up, "giving them a dose of reality," as one teacher phrased it. Another faction wanted to "treat the students as carefully as possible," to draw out from them what they thought were the important values of their own education and how it should proceed, and then praise them for any effort in the right direction. This substantive difference led to a lot of discussion, but to a standstill in the development of actual student-oriented activities. One member wryly observed, "This team is a great talker, but not a great doer."

The one concrete outcome was a Health Fair held in November 1989. Some indicated that the fair had occurred because some of the more action-oriented members of the team, including the principal, simply forged ahead despite continued reservations expressed by other members of the team. The students were guided to a degree in developing the fair, but they were also given many responsibilities, such as contacting speakers and arranging for blood tests and blood pressure tests. Most interviewees considered this fair a success.

There were other student-oriented developments -- the introduction of a peer tutoring program in some classes and student-organized activities such as a basketball tournament and picnics in the park -- but, according to one teacher, these changes could be attributed to another program rather than to the ST/T committee.

The chief result during the first two years was the frustration of members of the team who were rankled at the slow progress and limited agenda. One estimated that it had taken a year to fully develop the idea of student empowerment. "It was a long time in coming," said another; and a third added, "We've had a lot of problems. I've come close to quitting." As she put it, although the group could have been working on major restructuring, they instead became concerned with "little activities." Others disagreed, saying that they thought the process of coming up with a "big vision" for the school had taken longer than expected because of apathy, lethargy, and skepticism.

Nevertheless, according to all involved, there was dramatic improvement in both momentum and focus after a weekend retreat at Harriman House to which all staff were invited. More than 30 came in addition to the team. Many who attended spoke glowingly of this opportunity to get together in an informal but professional atmosphere to discuss and thrash out issues concerning their restructuring efforts. According to the chapter leader, "Saturday's retreat was great. We made a lot of plans for next year. The positive feelings generated give me reason to hope that the group will now make greater progress." She was also impressed that so many had been willing to take the time to drive up to the retreat on a Saturday to get involved in restructuring. "Two or three months ago we didn't think we would do it," she pointed out.

It should be noted that the intern principal from the Bank Street Principals' Institute, who had come to the school in February 1990, was a leader in planning the retreat. He first considered the ST/T group to be "like the old CSIP (Comprehensive School Improvement Program) committee," but he came to understand that the members of the team were struggling with difficult issues as they grappled with restructuring. Because he sympathized with their struggle and thought they were headed in the right direction, he was willing to help by organizing the retreat.

What Are You Learning?

One teacher summed it up for many when he observed, "I learned that group dynamics is a hard thing to work out and that reaching consensus is tough. But, on the other hand, collaboration is good." A similar lesson was voiced by the intern principal, who at first felt hurt when his proposed agenda for the retreat was not immediately accepted, but who learned, he said, that the staff had to "buy in" in order to accept the plan: "I learned that everyone had to have input. I respect them now for their judgment."

As with other change efforts, participants learned that change comes slowly. One member of the team visited Dade County, Florida, often cited as the most sustained and systematic restructuring effort in the nation, and observed that change was slow to come about even there. Another teacher said that expectations must be kept high because teachers, like students, will perform according to the level of expectation they develop; it was her view that, "Training and preparation really do matter."

Several teachers said they had learned that it was important for things to be accomplished as soon as possible so enthusiasm and motivation were maintained. One acknowledged, "There is negotiation to be done. You do have to sit down and discuss things. But you can't plan and plan without doing anything. It doesn't have to be complicated and you can learn from your mistakes -- and there will be mistakes no matter how much preparation you do." Another teacher said she had come to realize that the team had to be ready to keep moving forward even if those not on the team were indifferent to or critical of their efforts. "There are enough of us now who have said, 'We're not going stop because of those who don't want to go along,'" she observed.

To add to this, the principal noted that those on the team had become much more respectful of each other's abilities, and that she had learned more about the tremendous reservoir of talent within her faculty: "I've learned that they are very talented when they are treated as professionals. They really can solve most of my problems." She added that she hoped to see a time when she could operate only as a consultant to the team, while they took care of most of the major decisions of the school.

Most of those interviewed said that the principal had made some progress toward letting the team have more say in decisions. Some thought she had difficulty, however, in

letting go of total control of all aspects of the school. Further, opinions varied as to whether she had relinquished that control under pressure from the group or by her own volition.

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

All agreed that differing opinions, strongly held and interminably argued, had been a tremendous problem for everyone. Beyond that, opinions about barriers differed. Few complained about the issue of time. Since classes were over by 1:00 and their schedules were very flexible, it was possible for the committee to meet once a week from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

One teacher thought lack of finances had been a problem. She said that limited funding had meant that the group was continually forced to consider low-cost restructuring ideas. In support, another teacher said that it would help many students, for example, if there were more teachers, but that this was impossible at current spending levels.

The principal saw constraints at a different level, objecting to the many state regulations imposed on her students. Rather than directing them toward the correct skills, the requirements for graduation, in her view, were another obstacle that "cripples them even further." She noted that the school's high pass rate on Regents exams was artificial since many students did not even bother to show up to take the tests. She added that these graduation requirements had also limited the flexibility of the ST/T committee as it tried to make decisions about student empowerment.

What More Is Needed?

The retreat at Harriman House helped all team members gain perspective on their problems. Some said they could use help in funding and organizing these retreats once or twice a year. One teacher asked for more news about the other committees: "I would love to know more about the successes of the other schools...or I would love to know more about what they did that turned out so negative that we wouldn't want to do it." Another agreed, noting that if there were any other alternative schools attempting to restructure, it would be particularly helpful to network with them since alternative schools faced unique challenges.

One teacher had had a positive experience with some of her students on an Outward Bound type of experience funded with a mini-grant and suggested that the Teacher Center award mini-grants to those schools with innovative programs for students. She added that the team could use some help from someone with grant-writing experience.

Some commented that while the assistance provided by TCC had been excellent, they hoped for ongoing help. "It is essential in a program like this that we stop to reconnect with the trainers and the Center often, so that we continue to follow up and stay on track," said one team member.

Johnson Junior High School
Rego Park

Context

Johnson Junior High was a huge (1200 students) sleek, modern red-brick building surrounded by cooperatives and condominiums in a comfortable, safe neighborhood in Queens. It had two attributes unusual for a New York City school: an enrollment that had fallen steadily in the last few years and a multiethnic school population in which 75% of the students fell *above* the designated poverty line determining free school lunches. However, despite these indicators of relative affluence, two thirds of the students came from single-parent homes and most parents worked outside the home. The school was open until 5:00 each day to help these parents care for their kids.

Johnson JHS managed to avoid overcrowding only by running on multiple schedules, but the atmosphere was calm, clean, and orderly. Students spoke quietly in the halls and appeared self-confident in interactions with their teachers. There were a variety of special programs to attract special students and highly professional teachers; these included English as a second language, bilingual Russian, advanced placement, and special education classes. The staff was mature (many with more than 20 years' experience), stable, and reasonably content.

Focus of the ST/T Project

With the strong leadership of their chapter leader and the benign, though more passive, support of their principal, the 12 members of the original ST/T committee selected a highly ambitious restructuring project for Johnson Junior High School: the creation of what was essentially a complete mini-school for 150 seventh grade students, perhaps later to be extended to the entire school. As envisioned, their program offered alternative grouping -- cluster programming around five major subject areas and their teachers; optional scheduling -- freedom to depart from the standard 50-minute schedule; a variety of new teaching practices, including an emphasis on cooperative learning within an interdisciplinary curriculum; and increased communication between teachers, students, and their parents. The latter goal was to be furthered through a consultation group focused on student needs and staffed by the five cluster teachers, the guidance counselor, and parents.

Most ambitiously, and perhaps even unwisely, the team decided to implement the mini-school as soon as possible, without spending a great deal of time planning, coordinating, or generating political support for the idea among teachers not on the committee. Although no specific causal chain could be established, the upshot of these

choices was that the mini-school project had been beset by a variety of funding, political, and coordinating problems. Although it was deemed a great success by the students, by the ST/T committee, and particularly by the mini-school teachers who had been involved in planning, it had to sharply narrow its scope after only two years. It had, in fact, greatly improved morale and student-to-teacher and parent-to-teacher communication, but teacher-to-teacher, school-to-district, and school-to-state communication had been less successful.

First, the committee's attempt to fund the parent-involvement aspect of its program through a State Education Department grant ran into a number of difficulties. Endless telephone conversations with SED and subsequent revisions of the proposal proved necessary in order to get the grant in point-by-point compliance. Then it did not come in until March though expected the previous September. And, worst of all, unexpected restrictions meant that the monies received could not be spent as planned but had to be used for "teacher training." As a result, $38,000 desperately needed by the mini-school had to be returned to the state, unspent.

Second, there were significant problems implementing the cluster concept. For example, the committee was not able to staff the mini-school entirely from within its own ranks but had to ask for volunteers. Thus, some of the cluster teachers, not having been part of the planning, lacked the commitment possessed by the others. One in particular was in sharp conflict with the collegial demands of the cluster concept. Moreover, classes could not be combined or periods extended as planned; there were perceived difficulties with grouping students of widely varying abilities (for example special education and honors students) as called for in cooperative learning; and class sizes proved so large that the cluster teachers frequently felt overwhelmed.

Third, failure to generate political support among the teaching staff as a whole led to the sense that the mini-school was a choice made by an elite few, but a burden to be assumed by all. There was consequent resentment of the dislocations embodied in change and a perception that the mini-school was failing in its promise.

Fourth, circumstances brought about the unexpected retirement of the principal at the end of the project's first year. The committee requested that one criterion for selection of a new principal be a commitment to restructuring, and the district promised that such would be the case. Despite this, according to some teachers, the new principal was not a supporter of restructuring. Although he asserted that he was "in sympathy" with the committee's efforts, it was said that he often did not attend the committee's meetings. For his part, he said that restructuring should be attempted only when something is radically wrong and should proceed slowly even then. Further, it was his view that those not on the committee had been coerced into change, given little chance to offer input, and didn't buy into the philosophy of restructuring. He also argued that the time was not ripe for change since the city's finances had made it impossible to provide the financial support needed.

Given his own limited involvement with the ST/T committee, the dislocations of the

change process, and the lack of support for the mini-school among the teaching staff as a whole, his impression, in sum, was that the mini-school program was not as good as the program it had replaced.

Effects of the Restructuring Effort

The team planned to continue the mini-school, but -- at the request of the teachers directly involved -- it would involve a return to standard, individualized student programming instead of a cluster program. The chief innovation resulting from the initial experiment was to be a common preparation time for all seventh grade teachers, to facilitate consultation among teachers, students, and parents.

Because so many things went wrong, and particularly because of the evaporation of support by the district, by the state, and through the replacement of their principal, many members of the ST/T committee felt frustrated and disempowered. This reaction cannot be discounted and must be considered a significant effect of restructuring at Johnson: experiments do not always succeed, and having loved and lost is perhaps more painful than never having loved at all. These teachers had invested a great deal of time and effort in pursuit of a vision and in the hope and expectation that they could exercise control of a significant new program, and they saw their decisions reversed and their authority undermined.

What Are You Learning?

One teacher reported that the experience had caused her to open up to what was happening outside her own classroom, such as cooperative learning and the cluster concept. Most respondents, however, saw their learning as negative. Some, for example, said that the experience had served to surface the lack of trust and true collegiality present in the school. All took the position that restructuring without the full involvement of their principal had proven to be a serious, though unbidden and unavoidable, tactical mistake.

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

First there were *start-up problems*. As noted, there were "too many strings on the grant;" this led to the need for spending an inordinate amount of time fine-tuning the proposal, a long delay in receiving any money at all, and, ultimately, to the ruling that much of the money could not be used as intended and had to be returned. Then, according to the chapter leader, some teachers, due to lack of experience and "years of being told what to do," were uncomfortable with shared decision making. Some on the committee "didn't want to make decisions because then they would have to accept responsibility," and others felt that the shared decision-making process would not work except when the chapter leader was present. Moreover, some teachers felt that they had been pushed by the union to implement the program more quickly than was wise. They believed that the first year should have been

devoted entirely to planning, training, and particularly to further efforts to involve the staff as a whole.

In addition, this project suffered the simple bad luck of a change in principals. Faced with the task of learning everything at once about his new school, the principal indicated that he had found it difficult to read and internalize the mini-school grant and to become part of the process. Perhaps related to his lack of participation, the principal's conclusion, based on the politics of the school as he found them, was that the implementation of the mini-school had upset the orderly functioning of the school as a whole, increased the fractionalization of the staff, and led to the teachers being at odds with the administration and with each other.

By and large, the committee members understood the principal's position and did not blame him personally for his criticisms and lack of support. Teachers interviewed agreed that the school was a complex interactive entity supporting a variety of programs to meet student needs. They also agreed that a new program had to take into account its impact on other programs in the school, and adapt accordingly -- a problem for the mini-school supporters.

Second, there were *insufficient resources* to support the change effort. Not only was there a need for further training but there was never enough time to do team work; and worse, the many different schedules ruling the school meant that no common meeting time could be arranged during the school day. As a result, the committee felt forced to rely on 30-minute meetings before school in the morning and a large amount of time spent on the phone with each other at night, a source of exasperation and burnout. A related problem was the difficulty of recruiting supporters among the staff, many of whom felt burdened already by their jobs and family responsibilities and did not want the further responsibility of committee work before or after school. To meet these objections, the ST/T committee had asked the district for a half day of staff development; it was refused.

Third, there were *ongoing differences of opinion.* Some committee members had suspicions as to the motives behind the involvement of others, with the perception that they were promoting private agendas. Some teachers considered the committee to have been elitist. And most staff members considered teaching to be a 9-to-3 job and didn't want to make themselves available for evening meetings or functions, a viewpoint that the principal saw as a great barrier to shared decision making. Still, the original 12 members of the ST/T committee were able to recruit 12 more and to persuade more than 30 staff members to work with them.

Finally, there was *a lack of support from outside authorities.* Rather than helping the mini-school, involvement with SED had led to considerable frustration and teacher burnout, and the district had failed to keep its promise that one criterion for selection of a principal would be commitment to restructuring. The committee felt betrayed in this respect by outside authorities on whom they had depended.

What More Is Needed?

The most critical need was to improve communication among the staff. Second, staff development was needed to increase professionalism and interest in change, and to decrease fear of change. Third, there was a need for further training in conflict resolution and shared decision making, in the complex business of working together on committees in ways that lead people to feel valued and personally accepted even if their ideas are rejected.

Bluntly, there was a need for promises made (presumably by the state and the district) to be kept and not denied.

Andrew Williams Intermediate School
Hollis

Context

Andrew Williams Intermediate School in Queens was "a school without a neighborhood," according to the chapter leader. Built only 12 years ago out of tan brick, its bulky generic-modern shape took up most of a city block and seemed to be the centerpiece of its surroundings, an area of small apartment buildings, modest older homes, and tree-shaded sidewalks. But the district ended at its back door, we were told. Its 1400 students were 70% black, 20% Guyanese; 53 nationalities; 50% at risk; they came in by bus from all over Jamaica, but not from across the street. And they returned to homes whose parents felt no geographical connection to their children's school.

Most important, the school had a new principal. Very much a "new broom," by his own account he had been brought in to clean up a school that had fallen into poor performance and worse repute under the long-term stewardship of an older, somewhat withdrawn principal, now retired. "The school was near the bottom of the district in test scores (the second from the bottom of five) and it had a terrible reputation. I was asked to come in because I had previously turned around an elementary school," he recalled.

"I began by calling a meeting of all the staff and telling them about their reputation -- the district called the school 'a hell hole' and we were at the very least a school in need of improvement -- and when they complained I told them to prove the district wrong and held individual conferences. More than 90 [out of a staff of 120] came in. Since then I've thrown, I don't know, a hundred ideas at them -- Winter Concert, Career Day, an honor society trip to Yankee Stadium, a trip to the Poconos for all the seniors, a dance program, a chorus, new programs to support reading. All these are things *beyond* the classroom stuff that can make a real difference."

The principal's strategy of supplying challenge, creative ideas, and personal support seemed to be working, according to one teacher: "This used to be a cold place; now it's much warmer." Another agreed: "When I started there were groups beating each other up outside the school every day; now it's a safe environment. Lateness is down 75%. The immediate community was scared to death of our kids, now they're happy. The school was covered everywhere with graffiti, now it's almost clean." The principal himself observed, "The staff never talked with the old principal, now they come in and tell me what's going on because they know I'll listen." This last point was confirmed by the chapter leader, who said, "The old principal was a nice guy personally but an absolute tyrant, impossible to consult with. This one listens and works with us."

The observer followed this principal around the building like a kite on a short string, about 10 feet behind and controlled more by the wind of his movement than by individual will or other events. The first thing noticed, beyond the buffeting created by his speed and energy, were the reactions of those in his path. As he burst upon the changing scene from hall to stairway to hall to auditorium to hall to stairway to hall to lunchroom, each person and group froze perceptibly, as one might if a bear crossed one's path in the woods.

The second thing noticed were the many signs of a healthy, high-energy school. The principal pointed out two teachers with tennis racquets, off to coach a group during a free period: "They asked if they could do it and I said, 'Sure!' Now I'm trying to get them money for equipment." Photos on the wall showed a recent Career Day: "Never had one before. We had people in 28 classrooms." A gaggle of girls waited nervously to perform a dance for the assembly: "A teacher asked if she could start an exercise class for girls because there really wasn't any activity for them; now there are 40 dancers." A display case was devoted to memorabilia from the Winter Concert: "It was great. People said the parents wouldn't come out, but they came. Now they know this is a school they can be proud of." Relaxed kids moved purposefully through the hallways. Vigilant teachers constantly monitored the flow of events. "Our registers are growing because people are now trying to have their kids stay here even if the family has to move; we've never been at 1400 before," he added proudly.

Focus of the ST/T Project

To begin with, the chapter leader himself did not conceive the project as a means of restructuring the roles of teachers in the school, but rather as simply another source of funding and support for ideas he had hoped to put in place. He read about the ST/T program in a newspaper and went to the initial orientation by himself. Then he wrote up a proposal and got the principal, the one who subsequently retired, to sign off on it: "But I don't think he even bothered to read it; he certainly never came to any of our meetings." Finally, he hand-picked the members of the original committee. "To be frank, I didn't turn the proposal in as an SDM thing, though that's what it's become. None of them -- including the principal and the assistant principal who were totally opposed to SDM -- thought the proposal would be accepted," he recalled.

Subsequent events are somewhat obscured, particularly because the ST/T project did not develop an identity distinct from Project Basics, a teacher leadership program which had been established five years previously through the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL). This was staffed by many of the same activist teachers as the ST/T committee. According to the chapter leader, who was highly involved in both, Project Basics had been dormant until it was "jump-started" by ST/T. But, more to the point, those interviewed were not particularly clear about which projects had been fostered by which committee. They could point to specific projects and talk about their history and their own hopes, but they freely admitted that the work on that project by the two committees was "mushed together" in their minds.

Thus, a teachers' resource room, a project pushed by ST/T, was originally an idea from CEL (the sponsor of Project Basics); and the idea of increased efforts to orient new teachers came, they thought, from the ST/T committee with workshops provided through CEL. All respondents were pleased to talk about the various projects attempted, abandoned, and envisioned in the school, but the interviewer's attempts to trace the projects' etiology in order to write an ST/T case study were foreign to their thinking. But Project Basics was due to lose its funding in a year, and the two committees would then in fact as well as in practice be merged into one.

In addition, according to one team member, the committee's efforts had been "swallowed" by the new principal's initiatives: "There are so many, many things going on that it's hard to pick out just which ones come from the ST/T committee."

It was known, at least, that an ST/T committee had been formed: "The chapter leader asked me and I jumped right in," said one teacher. "Even the name of the committee was a draw. We're trying to bring all these good changes, trying to bring tomorrow into today." The committee then went through the Saturday workshop training, which they looked back on as effective and useful, particularly in helping them come together as a group. As part of this training, the group brainstormed a vision out of its various concerns and settled on an area of focus: security. Finally the larger staff was asked to respond through a survey, and ideas and suggestions were collected "which were brought into play this year."

Although some additional ideas had started with the ST/T committee but been carried out by Project Basics, many didn't come through or work out at all. This led at least one committee member to drop out: "I heard a lot of ideas but I didn't see much happening so I got frustrated and quit." She later rejoined the committee "because I kind of missed it once I got on top of my own work this year, and I like the idea of collegial lesson planning." Apparently, the committee had virtually stopped meeting in its second year, beginning to function regularly again only after the facilitators came on line.

Much of this was corroborated by the principal. In his eyes, the ST/T committee had been operating "in name only" when he came into the building. The previous year "seems to have been largely devoted to vision and process, with little to show for it." He added that what did show had come from within the Project Basics committee structure.

In its second year, the ST/T committee went on retreat with its new principal. The experience was said to have been excellent, particularly the exchange of visions and the chance to meet informally. "You couldn't consult with the old principal. This one really listens to us. He knows we won't put something into practice unless we think it's good for the school," said one committee member after that. The principal added, "The committee knows that they can talk about anything with me and I won't take it personally."

In the principal's version of events, the ST/T committee needed a jump-start, which he provided, asking it to support his initiatives by organizing a weekly staff training day,

finding trainers, and providing an avenue for teachers to meet and offer ideas. "I've shifted the focus of ST/T; it's going to be the main decision-making forum of the school. It didn't do much in the beginning, but now it's raising problems and concerns. Now I try to take a back seat," he said.

In the committee's version of events the principal figured less prominently but was still a major force.

Finally, the ST/T committee decided to form three subcommittees: on discipline, staff development, and curriculum. "We figured if we all stayed together all the time we wouldn't get enough done," commented one member.

Effects of the Restructuring Effort

The impact of the ST/T project on Williams Intermediate was somewhat blurred by the particular events in the school. In the first place, the committee did not appear to have conceived itself initially as a restructuring effort nor to have attempted a concrete project in its first year. It thus had a less substantial effect on the school than it might otherwise have had. Second, it did not seek to distinguish itself from Project Basics, and thus staff were somewhat vague about its impact.

Third, amidst all the upheaval of change brought on by the new principal, the ST/T process dimmed. Thus, the principal, in talking about the changes in the school, could state that there was enhanced morale, more participation and voluntarism by both students and teachers, more displays in the hallways, more knowledge about what was going on and coming up, and more direction -- but he could not in any way distinguish which of these changes had been brought on by the ST/T process as opposed to other influences.

Beyond these issues, particular to Williams, the ST/T committee's influence was limited by forces common to change in all schools. For example, its initial efforts met with considerable resistance from a reportedly cynical and burnt out staff. "There's a negative element -- both open resistance from the people who say, 'Nothing works,' and the weight of the quiet ones who you don't hear, you just feel," said one team member. Another added: "We were met with much skepticism because there had been so many previous attempts at change and so many failures. They didn't want us to succeed because they had failed."

Some of the committee's initiatives were thwarted by competing concerns. Shared lesson-planning, for example, appealed to a number of people but didn't happen much, according to one teacher: "In the math department a period was set aside last year so that everyone could work together and it was used well. But we got a new assistant principal for math this year, and he's under a lot of pressure from the district to follow a certain procedure that does not include shared lesson planning, so that's been cut back and some people are very resentful." And there was "Teacher as Counselor," a proposal allowing teachers to opt out of other assignments so they could meet with two or three kids they had

identified as needing teaching and counseling. "It was blocked by the principal, who felt he could not release teachers from their assignments to hall patrol. And the counselors weren't sure it was a good idea," commented another team member.

But some ideas did come into play and others were in development. One teacher, for example, was working on the ST/T subcommittee on discipline; they were trying to develop an in-school suspension policy and a uniform disciplinary procedure asking the classroom teacher to do more and to provide more information, "so the dean *knows* the teacher has done what the teacher can." Another member of the committee had started the Multicultural Club, which was giving the kids a positive way to talk about their differences. And there were ongoing programs on effective classroom management and cooperative learning.

Furthermore, the committee's efforts had had a transformative effect on at least some other staff, as one member noted: "More teachers have joined the committee and even more are actively working with us. The negativity is lessening, I think because they've seen things done." Another agreed: "The meetings widened our horizons and made us more active. We prodded others into being more active." And a third confirmed this: "The main thing is that we've opened up the school to discussion of any and all problems. Everything is OK to talk about; everyone is responsible; feels free. Previously, it wasn't that way. Second, we've taken the live wires and put them in a place where they can function. Third, we've gotten commitments from people to solve problems; the 'enablers,' those who passively let problems go on and on and on, aren't so powerful any more."

What Are You Learning?

Thoughts on learning fell into two categories, reflections on the *process* they were engaged in and reflections on *personal learning*. Concerning process, the chapter leader said that he had learned, "It's a lot of work -- communicating and listening when everyone does not think the way I do, and having to work with some people whom I have genuinely learned to dislike because they're phonies who mouth things they don't practice." Another teacher showed a similar concern: "I never realized how difficult it is to accomplish things. It takes an endless amount of patience to be in something like this. You have different personalities trying to work together. Personalities clash and things have to be overcome."

The principal was more positive: "I've learned that the people on the committee are wonderfully flexible and willing to help, whereas in the staff as a whole there's rumor milling, resentment between factions, picayune conflicts, a history of cliques, and favoritism. The committee offers me a tremendous feedback mechanism and channel of communication with the staff. Through them I get a reading on problems and a means of anticipating how to handle things."

Concerning personal learning, the chapter leader noted that he had learned "how to do committee work and how to be a leader, how to get people to go along with me in pursuit of something I'm looking for. The last one is a constant problem because people have different

agendas and I just have to help them toward our agenda." A teacher on the committee reflected, "There's so much I've learned...how to work with people who have different leadership styles, how to conduct a workshop or meeting on my own. I'm superintendent of my Sunday school, and I've used the skills I've learned here to work with my teachers there, particularly the part about accommodating to different styles." Another teacher simply found that the experience had changed her: "I was shy and I learned to speak out in a group."

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

The interviewees focused on three areas: First was *lack of resources,* particularly time. "Time is a problem. We just don't seem to have the time to sit and plan and implement," said one team member. Another agreed: "It's hard to find the time to get together to work on curriculum, and it's hard to find the information we need." Second were *the burdens of district policy.* "The district office is the biggest barrier. They have no sympathy for this ST/T stuff. They give us regulation but no support," asserted one committee member. "Depending on voluntarism is a problem. People should be paid for their time," added another. "In the math department we want to use more of a mastery learning model but the district mandates cluster progress, a rigid weekly schedule and district-wide tests," said still another. And third were *problems dealing with each other.* "The people involved are those involved with everything. We need to get more people, not just the same 30, to take part in projects -- though the ST/T process is helping in this respect," said one. Another claimed, "There are hidden agendas on the committee, and it's hard to deal with the 'overwhelming personalities,' the people who are so busy listening to themselves talk that they block our work." Still another said, "There's a lack of organization, and it all falls on me." Other complaints were: "We need to develop a more unified staff," and "The cynics are a burden."

What More Is Needed?

All responses fell into two categories. First was *the need for more resources.* "We need money -- for a teacher resource center, for bringing in workshop leaders, and to pay people for meetings -- or at least for dinner," said one team member. Another noted, "Training time should be paid. Treat people like professionals." A third observed, "We need more time." A fourth said, "I really think we're capable of doing this but we need time and support, approvals, and information." Another added, "I'd like to flesh out the teacher resource center: a carpet, partitions, samples of every product offered by the vendors, video tapes, typewriters, a computer, education journals; then we'd open it up to other schools."

And second was *the need for more expertise.* "There should be staff development days spaced throughout the school year on school time," suggested one team member. Another added, "It would be good to have a professional come work with us, not just for one workshop but maybe for three or four so that we could get past the jumping-off point that a single workshop brings about."

Apple Elementary School
Manhattan

Context

Apple Elementary School was a small, 30-teacher school, one of four programs within a single building known as the Strauss Community School. Its neighborhood, 95th Street and Third Avenue, was a mix of middle class urban life: tenements stood beside restored brownstones, bars beside small stores and restaurants.

Its district was "big on packaging," according to members of the ST/T committee, who believed they were losing the public relations battle to the many alternative programs in the district. In their view, despite their impressive restructuring efforts, their status as a "regular" school meant that parents passed them by as much as possible and only chose their school as a last resort or out of indifference. Some questioned how they could attract and retain students when the alternative schools seemed so much more attractive, and they worried about the survival of their school. Moreover, they said, the three other programs within their building further divided parent loyalty; a given parent, who might have been willing to become involved in their restructuring effort, might also have children in other programs, and thus be less responsive to the committee's outreach. Finally, the committee had the same problem with their principal, who had oversight of all four Strauss programs. Although they did not doubt that their principal supported their efforts, the demands made by the other programs meant that they did not get all the attention and active involvement they wished.

Focus of the ST/T Project

The restructuring effort of the ST/T Committee at Apple Elementary did not have a single focus, unless one defined it as the significant improvement of nearly every aspect of teaching and curriculum at the school. Targeted areas included reading -- the expansion of the whole language approach to include the entire school, institution of a schoolwide reading period at the beginning and end of each day, and development of a modified open library such as in the public system; math and science -- creation of a math lab and a computer lab, selection of textbook series that could be used in every grade and more closely followed the statewide curriculum; art -- establishment of an art studio program; foreign language -- establishment of a language lab; parent involvement; and reduction of class size.

To facilitate these changes, it was proposed that the school move to flexible scheduling in 15-minute modules, encourage collegial lesson planning and team teaching, create an in-house library for staff development, and request additional funding from the

district office. Oversight and management was to be provided through: (1) involvement of the whole staff in shared decision making so that they could have input on allocation of funds, selection of new staff, text book selection, scheduling, and refinement of a schoolwide discipline plan; (2) formation of a School Management Team consisting of the principal and three or four teachers (the teachers serving for a prescribed term); and (3) twice monthly after-school meetings with interested staff.

The team reported that the district did provide the funds requested for additional curricular materials and that in most targeted areas planned changes were implemented or significant steps were taken in that direction. Changes that did not take place (e.g. creation of math, art, computer, and foreign language labs, institution of an open library plan, and establishment of flexible, modular scheduling) were stymied by lack of physical space or sufficient staff. Full institution of all these changes would have required hiring an additional two teachers and three paraprofessionals, and money had not been found for this.

Notable successes included full implementation of whole language and reading programs; the creation and execution of a number of collaboratively planned and team-taught lessons; the creation of a four-member School Management Team, which successfully passed management responsibility to a second team after a year; and the nearly unanimous (99.6%) choice by the staff to become an SBM/SDM school.

What Are You Learning?

As might be expected, the principal learnings reported by the ST/T committee and the staff at Apple Elementary School were (1) considerable growth in group process skills; and (2) the realization that restructuring requires an immense amount of work.

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

Most important, there were *insufficient resources* to support the change effort. Problems of lack of funding for additional staff and lack of space have been previously noted. In addition, those interviewed pointed out that the combined responsibilities of creating new programs while teaching the old ones were draining, perhaps to the point that they could not both be managed well. They also complained of insufficient shared time for meetings and consultation. The latter problem made it necessary to schedule meetings before or after school and led to conflicts between school and home and inevitable guilty feelings when one or the other was being shortchanged.

Second, there were *ongoing differences of opinion*. Compartmentalization and specialization of staff led, for example, to unwanted competitiveness concerning allocation of limited resources.

Finally, there was *a lack of support from outside authorities*, particularly a lack of

recognition "from the top" concerning the extraordinary efforts made by the staff and the principal.

What More Is Needed?

Obviously, the committee felt the need for more time, more space, and more funding. In addition, it saw the need for information and training in how to tackle some of the curriculum issues that came up through their initial restructuring efforts, and in the public relations question of how best to promote their school.

Bettinger Elementary School
Manhattan

Context

Bettinger Elementary School was one of those large Victorian school buildings tucked away in the midst of large American cities. When it was built in 1898, its five stories had towered over many of the smaller tenements of the surrounding Lower East Side. Now it was crowded in by the assorted jumble of dilapidated brownstones and new merchant buildings that made up New York's Chinatown. Its stern facade of limestone blocks contrasted with the brightly decorated shops and food markets that edged into Catherine Street. To the visitor, the streets seemed completely Asian -- as if a block of Hong Kong had been set down next to the pavements of New York.

This strong Asian influence was reflected in the school population, which was almost entirely made up of the children of Chinese immigrants. The morning of the site visit mothers were attending a special breakfast in the cafeteria and the language that predominated was Cantonese.

Despite the building's size, Bettinger Elementary was overcrowded, with 660 students struggling through steep and confining stairwells and along narrow hallways much in need of new plaster and paint. "They're the greatest. They love to learn and they're no problem," according to one teacher. "There may have been other problems here," -- in 1980 the principal left under a cloud and there was a series of temporary principals assigned during the next three years -- "but we never complain about the kids." Many of the staff had been part of the school in 1980 and could remember the turmoil and low morale of never knowing who was or was going to be in charge. Now they were proud to point out that many teaching veterans strove to get positions at their school.

Focus of the ST/T Project

The beginning of ST/T at Bettinger Elementary School was straightforward: the chapter leader heard about the program and put a note asking for volunteers in the mailbox of every teacher. There were a number of responses, and this group then convened a few times in the winter of 1988-89 to come up with an initial sense of direction. According to one of the coordinators, "We sat around and brainstormed about what we wanted the school to be like in the future," and then sent in the application to be involved in the ST/T experiment. At this point, in their own words, the group wanted "to break down some of the traditional school barriers in terms of time, class organization, staff organization, and curriculum development," and to change many elements within the lower grades.

This ambitious group found it much more difficult to implement than to plan their program, however. First, as one teacher put it, "There were some very different personalities on the team. Some reacted against any kind of imposed, formal structure in the decision making." This slowed down their moves to action. However, the greatest, and indeed insurmountable, difficulty came from outside. The major thrust of their first year was to be a restructuring of the Pre-K program, to include curriculum planning along themes, cluster teachers, and team teaching. However, initial efforts in that direction slowed to a halt in the fall of 1989 when the Board of Education suddenly expanded the Pre-K classes from three to six.

Thus, because their major initiative was unexpectedly thwarted, even though the team had gone through training and had great praise for the training provided, it was not clear that the group had managed any specific programmatic changes in their first two years. When asked about their accomplishments, the team members described process progress but little, if any, concrete change. Said one teacher, "In the last month or so there has been a sort of reawakening. People have said, 'Let's decide this or that. Let's stop and see what we have accomplished.' We had a recent retreat and I think there was some real honest communication there, some real energy." Another said she thought that finally they had their group procedures worked out well. She thought the committee was much more able to make decisions and come to mutual agreements: "We have acquired an openness that is good. Now I feel we can move on with more confidence."

The principal spoke more positively about the team's change efforts. He saw the team, first, as an important advisory group helping him with decisions on every level from computer programs to the clerical support budget. Second, he pointed out that the team had been instrumental in developing a peer tutoring program, innovative textbook selection, curriculum matters, and the development of ungraded primary units.

What Are You Learning?

It was clear from speaking with the participants that all had learned a great deal from the experience, both personally and professionally. One teacher said, "I found the programs at the Teacher Center very fulfilling on both levels." And all had praise for the assistance and support provided by the Teacher Center.

A parent representative said many were excited to learn that they could participate in decisions: "We have learned that we really do have the power to participate and contribute."

All participants had learned that shared decision making was difficult to bring about quickly. When asked about the lessons she had learned, one teacher smiled and said, "Well, you can lead a horse to water but..." She noted that it was extremely difficult for the teachers to really feel that change was in their hands: "They look around for a leader, and it is frustrating when they do not have a leader." Another agreed, "We need help to direct

things. Sometimes it gets too loose and it is really hard for any one of us to assume chairmanship. The group needs to decide as a whole who the chairman should be and then give that person time to organize the meetings."

Another committee member added that along with this discomfort with leadership came an initial inability to structure plans: "We need a vision, but we also need to be able to take it [into reality] bit by bit, to have kernels and building blocks. I think a group gets...I think our group got frustrated when the whole thing didn't happen right away."

Someone else said she had learned "that a certain number of people don't have a commitment for change...yet there are a few with the vision for change out there. I do see some possibilities." After some further consideration she said that she thought there was no one type of personality needed for an effective group, that diversity in ideas and viewpoints was necessary. Nevertheless, she stressed that the group had needed more guidance and more knowledge of the intricacies of group dynamics.

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

First, there were *start-up problems,* particularly those based on personality conflicts and different interpretations of how best to proceed. Those interviewed were exceptionally careful not to assign blame to particular people, but their comments about their group interactions noted conflict from the beginning.

One teacher said, "Problems began right away. Everybody had different ideas of how to set up the school-based options...and even once we had set up our mission statement with its goals, everyone had different ideas about how to do it." Further, several teachers noted that people on the team had approached problems with markedly different decision-making styles. Said the chapter leader, "I'm the kind of person who likes to think in broad terms and then get something going so that things happen quicker. On the other hand, there are people on the committee who like to slow down and make sure of every point before moving on to action." There was also, as previously noted, a resistance to the leadership model (use of a convener, reflector, and recorder) proposed during their training: "The people didn't want to take on these roles...the team has resisted it, and resisted it until last week...I guess this happened because there are very different personalities on the team and they reacted against the imposed formal structure."

Second, there were *insufficient resources* to support the change effort, particularly a lack of time for meetings. "We just didn't have enough meetings. It wasn't systematic. Teachers had to steal time from other places and different people had different responsibilities, you know, and different lunch hours," said one team member. Another said, "The trouble is getting everyone together for a common time...We'd try for an eight a.m. meeting but people didn't always come at eight. Sometimes by the time we got going we would not have that much time left." And a third added, "The element of time is really difficult. Sometimes you need a block of time to get to the meat of a discussion so you can

decide what it takes to be done...We really need a period a week."

Finally, there was *a lack of support from outside authorities.* The Board of Education decided to suddenly expand the school's Pre-K program. "We were like a train and the Teacher Center was a great engine...We knew what we were going to do. But boom! With the new year there were immediate problems, like a lot of cars coming into the railroad junction all at once," observed one team member. Since the central thrust of the ST/T committee had been to restructure the lowest grades, this unexpected expansion completely stalled their efforts. Many expressed frustration to the interviewer: "It [the Pre-K expansion] made a big difference. It happened so quickly...Pre-K was supposed to be our model for restructuring but we had new staff coming on board, and new classrooms...It has taken a lot more time for them to adjust and to accept the idea of restructuring."

What More Is Needed?

Team members often commented that they had needed more time to meet. Some suggested that it would have been a great benefit if the meetings could have been scheduled during the regular school day. This would have led to more attendance and possibly more continuity in the agendas.

There was some discussion about the need for more help from the facilitators during the second year. One teacher observed that there did not seem to be an overall plan to take the facilitators all the way through the life of the project; she regretted this. Moreover, it was pointed out, it seemed that the facilitators' overall duties had expanded and, although they were praised highly for their involvement, the increase in duties had led inevitably to less attention to the team.

Other stated needs included more personnel, more funding to help increase parent involvement -- such as a stipend to cover the cost of a baby-sitter -- and, according to a parent, some training set aside strictly for the parents: "At a lot of these meetings we talk and we listen but we lose out as time goes by because we are unsure of what is being discussed...I would like to see a trainer come in and explain some of the things a parent should know about a school, someone to explain the mechanics of the school."

Charles Wilson Elementary School
The Bronx

Context

Charles Wilson Elementary School was actually made up of three school buildings connected by walkways. The central portion was the oldest, completed in 1899 according to the plaque at the front door. The other sections were much newer and had the wide halls and low ceilings of modern school architecture. Despite the efforts of various architects, the school as a whole had a disjointed, rabbit-warren-like complexity. And it was packed with children and personnel. At the time of the site visit, there were 2100 children (actually 300 fewer than the previous year, following the establishment of a nearby mini-school) and about 200 teachers and staff. The teachers were quick to point out the large size of the school, and it seemed clear that it was at the root of many of their problems.

The surrounding streets had the exhausted and littered look of a poor neighborhood. Unemployed men skulked in doorways. The principal said that the community had been solidly middle class in earlier times, but that in the past few decades those who could had all moved away. Teachers added that although the area was not truly dangerous, crime was a constant problem; students, they felt, often came to school not so much to learn but because it was the only safe place in their lives.

The population of the school was about 60% black and 40% Hispanic. Many of the families of the Hispanic children were recent immigrants from the Dominican Republic. The school had been cited on the state's Comprehensive Assessment Report (CAR), indicating low standing on New York State achievement indicators, and no one seemed to have great hope that it would get out of that category, despite some recent progress.

Because of its CAR status, Wilson Elementary had been targeted for improvement efforts as part of the comprehensive school improvement program (CSIP). The efforts of the CSIP team had been rewarded by a grant of more than $290,000 for enrichment programs, and as a result the school had been able to offer an impressive array of after-school as well as in-class programs for students, including programs to improve parent involvement. There were no parents on the ST/T team, although there were several on the CSIP committee. The principal, who had been with the school more than 20 years, said that the previous year with its CSIP-funded programs was "the best year that I can remember."

As at many urban schools, Wilson's faculty commuted to work and was disconnected from local events and people. According to the principal, the teachers worked hard, but many "have that eight-to-three mentality." Nevertheless, he seemed proud of his team and remarked, "There is not a problem with any of them. They work very well together."

Focus of the ST/T Project

The project began when the chapter leader heard about the ST/T program at a UFT meeting. She brought the literature back to the school principal. "We both read over the literature and we said, 'Let's do it!'" she recalled. The principal remembered that he welcomed the idea as soon as it was suggested. He added that in such a large school he had found it impossible to have a strict hierarchical chain of command. "I can't be autocratic in a school this large. It [the ST/T team] seemed a good idea."

After their proposal was accepted, the chapter leader and principal asked for volunteers for the team. The chapter leader said, "I tried to get people from different groups, like early childhood, bilingual, special ed, and so on." By the time they finished recruiting, they wound up with too many interested people -- almost 20 -- so the two then sat down and selected a group they thought would effectively represent the whole school.

After training, the group "really got going" in spring, 1989. To find out which problems required the most attention, the team surveyed the teachers. This revealed that the lunchroom was most distressing. According to the principal, "The whole lunchroom situation irked the teachers greatly." Each building had its own lunchroom, cavernous, without soundproofing, and with tables set close together -- "feeding factories," said one of those interviewed. Compounding the problem, the school had poor playyard facilities, allowing only a small number of children to get out to play during the lunch periods. Their pent-up energy often displayed itself in errant behavior in the lunchroom. According to the assistant principal, the situation in the lunchrooms had deteriorated to the point of near chaos. There had been incidents of food throwing and fights among children. "There was also a lot of tension -- you could feel it in those lunchrooms," she said.

The team worked hard to come up with solutions. According to the assistant principal, their ideas followed three stages. First, at the beginning of the year the students were informed of the code of behavior required in the lunchrooms. Charts were posted that showed the behavior of each class and how it was progressing. Second, the class with the best performance in the lunchroom each month received a reward such as ice cream, extra gym periods, or the chance to see a movie. The final idea was to include a discipline system -- including a lunch detention -- to punish those students who committed severe infractions. This last part of the plan led to a setback for the team, however. One teacher explained it this way: "We wanted to have a lunchroom detention, but we couldn't get a separate room for it...So we decided that we would volunteer in turns to take them. But we couldn't get any volunteers from the other teachers...so it didn't last for more than a few weeks."

Nevertheless, the group rallied and decided to change the plan so that lunchroom infractions could be disciplined through an in-house suspension program, itself another result of work by the ST/T team. Faced with what they perceived to be excessive discipline problems, the committee devised an in-house suspension program to be run by one full-time

teacher and a paraprofessional, and convinced the principal to set aside a special room with the proper supplies and equipment.

All those interviewed spoke highly of this program. As the assistant principal said, "It's a deterrent -- and it works." More broadly, some said that faculty absenteeism had dropped significantly compared to the previous year because of the program. "It cuts down on teacher absenteeism because it relieves the stress on all the teachers," said one team member. Funding constraints threatened the in-house suspension program in 1990-91, but team members were determined to maintain it. Said one teacher, "We need to remain united on this and committed to keeping it."

The team also planned to focus on two more improvements to lunchtime scheduling. One concept was to arrange schedules so that children did not have to change buildings to eat lunch; at that time some classes had to march up and down stairwells and through crowded hallways in order to reach their assigned lunchroom. In conjunction with this change, they wanted to experiment with changing the time for lunch for some of the grades; this, in turn, would allow for more flexible scheduling throughout the school. Some on the team anticipated problems with this last idea, however, since changes in schedule were not always welcomed by all teachers, especially those with seniority, and because negotiations as to who would get which lunch period might lead to conflict.

What Are You Learning?

There seemed to be an exceptional resilience and determination within this group. Instead of being slowed and stalled by the harsh realities and tough issues facing Charles Wilson Elementary School, they seemed to bear down and forge ahead with more momentum. One teacher summed it up this way: "It takes a lot of hard work and you have to keep trying. There are so many obstacles. You have to keep going over and over it again and again until you come up with some kind of answer."

Another teacher agreed: "This kind of change takes time. It can be very frustrating. You are dealing with so many different personalities. Just trying to get a concept up and going can be tough." As an example, she cited the team's efforts to get the faculty to vote on the Chancellor's site-based management initiative. Despite the team's efforts, few people even bothered to return the ballots. "You spend all your prep time getting together a survey or questionnaire...and then they don't even hand it in," she noted.

The assistant principal said that she had learned to "hold my tongue" during meetings. She explained that she had been used to telling others what to do but that she had learned to listen more and let the other members express their opinions. "We really have learned that we can talk to each other -- and learn from what we say to each other," she explained.

Another teacher concurred that they had all become proficient at discussion procedures: "We now focus in on the task, listen better, and communicate with different

people better." They all felt that the training they had received from the Teacher Center was crucial to their learning about their own functioning and about group dynamics.

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

The intimidating size of the school remained the chief barrier to the team's work. Everyone explained that the sheer number of the faculty, let alone resistant attitudes, made it difficult to communicate the interests and activities of the ST/T team. The team had put up a bulletin board in the teacher's lounge to help with the problem, for example, but days sometimes passed without comment from anyone. As the assistant principal said, "Communication -- just getting the word out to everyone -- can be tough."

And even when the word was out it was not always welcomed: "Getting the whole school involved is difficult...We've tried to include others in our meetings, but they're not willing to come to the early meetings. They say, 'What's in it for me?'" said one teacher, adding that it was difficult to convince others of the long-term rewards of the team's actions.

And finally, there were political problems both within the team and between the team and the rest of the staff. Some of the members, it was said, had had an authoritarian tone at first about what they wanted to see done, and had said, "You *have to do"* this or that. Such internal communication problems were worked out over the course of the team's time together. More difficult to address was an initial perception by some of the staff that the team was "an elite group" setting itself above others. However, it was felt that this misperception too had changed as the team had become more visible and familiar.

What More Is Needed?

This group was used to being self-reliant, so questions about assistance were usually answered with a confident shake of the head. The assistant principal, after some thought, said she did not think the group needed help. She praised the two facilitators provided by the Teacher Center: "They were able to give us insights we never had thought of before. They also helped us to be professional, to keep on track with our goals." Others agreed. "We like our facilitators and we hope to keep them...I'm sure we could use help in some areas, but I'm not sure what they are right now," reported one teacher.

Another teacher observed that they only rarely got the chance to talk to other ST/T groups. She hoped the Teacher Center could arrange meetings among all the groups: "It always helps to hear from other schools...I'd like to know what they accomplished and how they accomplished it." The chapter leader made a similar argument: "I'd like to visit other sites...to see something working in a school...to see how they overcame the hurdles...It would be especially good to show the assistant principal and the principal how it is done in other schools...This might really facilitate things for us."

Swearingen Elementary School
Staten Island

Context

Swearingen Elementary School was located amid the quiet, residential blocks of West New Brighton on Staten Island. The homes, while not large, were solid and stood behind well-tended lawns. Built during the 1940s and 1950s, they were relatively stately and old compared to most Staten Island houses. The three-story school with its solid facade of red brick and solemn rows of tall windows seemed to be the very picture of the classic American school building. Although constructed more than 50 years ago, it had been well maintained and seemed free of peeling paint or broken fixtures. Reflecting the traditional concepts of organization, the whole building was in a box shape with a square courtyard in the center and rectangular classrooms filling each floor. There was a large clock in each hallway and classes proceeded in boisterous but straight lines to their various destinations.

There were few young teachers visible. Most were middle-aged and had been at the school for many years. The ST/T facilitator for the school observed, "We have very senior teachers here. I think about 15 years is the average time spent at Swearingen." This reservoir of experience seemed to give the school its sense of order and continuity.

The principal also embodied this sense of tradition. Without raising his voice or resorting to rule books, he was able to convey confident authority. Although close to retirement age, he moved about the school with the conviction and energy of a man half his age. His school was overcrowded with more than 800 students, yet he appeared to radiate an avuncular concern for each one. While making his rounds, he frequently stopped a child to inquire about a problem or praise a recent success.

Yet, while the community, the school building, and the faculty of Swearingen Elementary had stayed true to the traditional goals of education, there were significant shifts in the makeup of the student body. One teacher who had taught in the school more than 10 years noted that fewer of her students were now getting support at home: "Sometimes I get a class where half of the kids haven't done their homework." The assistant principal lamented that many of the students were in a "limbo stratosphere." She added that a significant number of the children came from single-parent homes and did not get enough guidance about even basic skills.

There had also been an increase in the number of immigrant children who were not proficient in English. Although they scored high enough to disqualify them from ESL courses, "That means they are barely functioning and not at all above grade level," said a teacher. The resource room teacher said, "We're trying to get them before they become

lost...Right now they are treading water...We want them to swim rather than go under." A teacher who said she had been teaching for 27 years, but who was not part of the restructuring team, said she also had noticed that not only did her children come to school less prepared to learn, but there was also increasing pressure for them to learn more. "It used to be that by the time they got out of kindergarten it was okay if they could count a little. Now they are expected to count from one to one hundred," she said.

Along with this concern about changes in skills, home support, and demands for higher performance, there was a fear of the changes brought about by larger political forces. Specifically, a plan by the local school board to reduce the school's overcrowding by rezoning and reducing the district boundaries loomed on the horizon. This would change the racial composition of the school -- currently 65% white, 30% black, and 5% Asian -- toward a greater proportion of minority students. Although the community as a whole was upset by this change in racial makeup and feared a depreciation in land values, the school staff were worried more about the absolute loss of 90 students and the consequent reduction of staff by three. The principal predicted that school morale would be affected by these losses, but he shrugged off the increased numbers of minority students as a lesser issue because the school had been integrated for a long time. Nevertheless, several teachers conceded they were concerned about the possible increase in at-risk students.

Focus of the ST/T Project

Prompted by their concerns about low-performing primary students and lured by a Teacher Center flyer, several teachers wrote a proposal in September 1988 to get involved in the ST/T project. In fact, six representatives from the school, including the principal and assistant principal, attended the introductory seminar. The presentation apparently fired them with enthusiasm and they came back to their school ready to make changes. One participant said, "We wanted to try it...Three of us already ate lunch and talked together anyway...We thought we might as well make it formal."

Beginning in January 1989, the initial team attended Saturday workshops on Staten Island and in Manhattan at the Teacher Center headquarters. After this training period, the team presented an ST/T program to the rest of the faculty at Swearingen soon after Labor Day, 1989. According to one, they first held a general faculty conference and then organized grade-level meetings. Then the staff drafted a "big vision: Provide high quality education for all of the children of a traditionally middle class community. Develop a school environment where all individuals are valued and encouraged to realize and strive to attain their fullest potential."

To move toward this vision, the team and staff worked first on greater communication through arranging schedules so that teachers from each grade could get together. Due to these scheduling shifts, teachers from every grade were able to meet at least once a month. One team member said, "It has given us much more structure in our communication with each other. It's now much less piecemeal." She added, "I like it because it makes us

talk...It is a chance to put personalities aside so we can work as colleagues."

According to one of the first team members, "The staff is now zeroing in on the at-risk children. The focus is to meet the needs of *all* of the children, even the at-risk ones." An outgrowth of their work was a $1000 grant from the Teacher Centers Consortium for materials and supplies so that students could reinforce in the classroom skills that they had learned in the resource room.

The overall progress, however, was concentrated on process-related matters rather than actual structural changes. A teacher observed, "Restructuring is a very personal thing...and it has been a *slow* process. Everyone needs to feel secure in whatever position they hold...and they have to respect the positions of others." Because of this, much of the first year was spent on the process of building a sense of security.

The most ambitious of the Swearingen Elementary School restructuring projects was a "transition" class between kindergarten and first grade for about 20 children identified as not ready for a traditional first grade but not needing to stay back in kindergarten. In pursuit of this idea and with the help of the facilitator, the group met with a teacher from another district with an "unstructured primary grades" system. While the meeting was helpful, one teacher reported that this was not what they had in mind. The idea seemed to be still in the planning stages, and although many expressed the hope that the class could begin the following year, many issues remained to be resolved.

Although one of the tenets of ST/T has been parent and community involvement, this was clearly not a priority at Swearingen. In part, this was due to the rezoning issue preoccupying the community, but it was also because the teachers and administrators of the school appeared to want to get their own house in order before inviting in parents.

What Are You Learning?

For all concerned, ST/T involved a major commitment. They learned that it meant increased time, revised schedules, and altered expectations. In some cases, it meant conflict.

The principal, among others, spoke of the trouble of keeping everyone interested. Smiling, he admitted, "I thought every teacher would be infused with excitement about the idea, that the enthusiasm of the few would go on to the most. But some people seem 'enthusiasm resistant.' It just didn't catch on." A veteran teacher who had seen many things come and go at the school said simply, "Some of the teachers are not really involved...They are holding onto their old ideas and don't want to take the initiative." But she said she saw progress because the grades were meeting together regularly and the lines of communication were more open.

Some asserted that in a large school personality conflicts are inevitable. One teacher observed that she thought teachers were inherently independent by nature, that they liked the

fact that they could shut the door and do what they wanted. Therefore, she believed, it was hard for them to adjust to a united, shared decision making project. Another thought it was not the nature of teachers but the nature of change that was the issue: "The roots of successful restructuring need time to grow. It must come from within a school environment and grow -- based on the needs and goals of the school members and the community. Some things may work, some may not work, but we're in the business of learning and growing...We have nothing to lose by trying, and a lot to gain."

Another was equally hopeful, especially because of the environment of shared decision making across the country: "When I first started you were told, 'This is what you will teach -- period.' Now the administration has a much more open outlook, more flexibility...It's just a good idea, because having more people involved in the curriculum can only be positive."

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

Although she was optimistic, one teacher said she found the restructuring time-consuming. She added that although she was given a stipend during the training period, after that she got nothing. She chuckled, "Now we have to do the work *and* not get paid for it."

The lack of financing was accepted as the status quo by all. Thus, although the kindergarten teachers hoped to enlist the aid of a paraprofessional in creating their transitional class, they did not hold high hopes of getting the budget for this position. A teacher said, "The basic problem is always money." However, the principal took an opposite view, asserting that money was not a problem for their ST/T project since it had never been anticipated in the first place: "We have always been working within our own resources, our own imposed limitations."

The transitional class idea was also being discussed with the district coordinator of early childhood education. Some feared that this person might, intentionally or unintentionally, hinder their plans. The simple lack of reaction from the district was seen by some to be a barrier to further planning.

Others pointed out that overcrowding remained a significant barrier to change, as illustrated by one teacher's comment: "We have done as much as we can in these times...Overcrowding is overcrowding. It is hard to alleviate that with restructuring."

What More Is Needed?

The question about further help both pleased and startled those interviewed at Swearingen Elementary School. Although they were delighted to hear the question and to think about the possibility of help, they were not entirely prepared to answer. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, funding was considered a crucial issue and all made it clear that any

extra funds would be greatly appreciated. One thought that it would be helpful to get more information on the restructuring movement, specifically on how other schools were making progress. A kindergarten teacher said, "We can't be the only ones thinking of a transitional class...We need ideas. How do we approach the parents? Is promotion to this kind of class enough to satisfy them? I mean are we just reinventing the wheel here?" In fact, almost everyone stressed the need for more information and, in a larger sense, a need for further communication and affiliation.

Several thought additional workshops conducted by the Teacher Center staff at their school would be a big boost to their efforts. One suggested in particular that they should have a visit from one of the leaders of the Center for School Reform at Teachers College: "We could use more input from people like her...She could come and talk to all the staff." But another said that she would still like to see a few more workshops on "how to talk to each other."

Michael Deeter Elementary School
The Bronx

Context

Michael Deeter Elementary School was "the last school in the Bronx, geographically," the interviewer had been laughingly told when he asked for directions. It sat about a mile from where New York City ended and Pelham began in Westchester County, and certainly there were no overt indications that one was in NYC: no skyscrapers in sight, no crowded red-brown three and four-story buildings, no sense of the generations of immigrants who had passed through the inner-city neighborhoods in the northeast United States.

In fact, this neighborhood could have been described as "outer city." The streets were wide and reasonably clean, and there were no abandoned buildings or burned-out hulks of cars. Most buildings were no more than four stories tall and one could feel the sky when walking the streets or looking out the window. Still, the neighborhood was very poor. "Not quite the poorest of the poor," one teacher said; that required that 75% of the school's families be below a government-designated poverty line. But it was only a percentage or two better than that. The student body was about 70% black, 30% Hispanic, and drawn almost entirely from two projects, one for the destitute, the other for low-income families.

These were "the largest projects in the Bronx," according to one teacher who lived in them, and who had grown up in them and gone to Deeter Elementary School as a child. According to her, the neighborhood used to be a beautiful place but now was drug-infested, and there were a lot of single parents, and grandparents raising foster kids, kids who are "so ready to fight each other." The school was surrounded by these projects on two sides and the blocks around it contained nothing but project buildings, some eight stories tall; a modern junior high; a large, empty playing field surrounded by a chain link fence; and one or two low, sprawling government service buildings, like factories for the processing of humans. One had the sense that before the projects came there had been nothing here but unimproved land.

The school itself was red brick and fairly modern. It was three stories tall and about three times as long as it was high, spreading down the side of most of a city block. If one took two steps off the street, one would find oneself in the ground floor hall. There was a desk for a security guard in the entrance way, but the visitor was likely to find it deserted. The entrance was clean and quiet, with posters made by kids hanging from strings, lined by bulletin boards displaying their art and spectacular essays: "A Picture of my Favorite Monster," "Our Trip to the Ballet," "Why Iago is Bad." In the upper corridors, kids were marshalled into quiet lines by their teachers, and they waited patiently for the chance to go

up or down the stairs, or just for the appearance of their next handler, the next-period teacher. Dozens of kids waved or flashed their eyes at a visitor, and a bold one might have called out, "What's your name? Are you visiting today?" But the call was made quietly. There were no disruptions or any voices raised more loudly than a teacher's firmness.

Yet, despite the visitor's sense of quiet and order, reasonably happy kids, and contented teachers well in control, all those interviewed spoke of a "breakdown" of discipline and a sense that the principal was not doing a good job of backing up the staff. There was also sharp conflict among the staff: on one side were those who wanted "strict rules, established procedures and sure punishment"; on the other, those who wanted more staff training and consciousness-raising, together with student participation in development and administration of a code of behavior. "People feel sure we need to do something soon. If things just go on we're definitely going to be in trouble 'cause things are going to get out of hand -- but we're just not sure what to do," said one team member. This topic, school discipline, and this question, what to do to improve things, became the focus of the ST/T initiative: "We decided that it was something we had worked on least and needed to develop the most," recalled a team member.

Focus of the ST/T Project

The Deeter Elementary School ST/T project began with an announcement published in the UFT paper. The chapter leader read it and was interested enough to want to learn more, so she and another teacher went to the principal and suggested that the three of them attend the orientation meeting.

Following that, the three decided to develop an ST/T committee. The chapter leader brought the possibility into a union meeting at the school, attended by about 40 of the school's 70 teachers. About 10 or 12 teachers volunteered for the committee -- anyone who volunteered was in -- which then began the process of Saturday training, identification of a mission/vision, and selection of a project.

At this point, according to one of the initial members, the committee issued an open invitation to all staff to attend its meetings, and two teachers accepted. But "there was still a perception by some that the committee was an elitist group," added the team member. A young teacher who had not been part of the start-up group but later joined the committee described her own initial perceptions of it as "mostly made up of supervisory people, people who already worked with the principal." The principal said, "Everyone who bought in had their own agenda." She spoke comfortably of committee politics and politicking, and asserted that committee decisions were not really made by voting *or* by consensus, but were more or less left up to her. A teacher describes this process as, "Well, we just sort of decide things," while the principal described it as, "Really, what I decide, that's what we do."

One got the sense that the Michael Deeter Elementary School ST/T committee was

not really in favor of shared decision making. Rather, it was comfortably evolving wider decision-making roles for a few teacher-leaders. These leaders were already invested in managing the school and used to working with a principal who had retained all the reins of leadership, but they were also interested in empowering others to attempt new roles.

Through the Saturday meetings and the techniques learned on the retreat, the committee identified three goals: to improve service to younger pupils, to increase parental involvement, and to create a more positive school climate. The practical work of implementing each goal was then delegated to subcommittees, which had varying success in moving from vision to new structures. "It's very difficult to get anywhere," said one committee member. Another agreed: "It's a slow process. People get frustrated."

The first goal was quickly and successfully implemented through departmentalizing reading in the second grade. After that practice had been in place for a year, plans were made to extend it to a primarywide ungraded reading program. As the principal put it, "People showed their commitment and it's paid off."

Staff efforts to reach out to and create greater involvement with parents were not as successful. The chief project was a series of supportive parent-education workshops, "Mondays for Mommies," which grew out of a subcommittee's meetings with the parents. About $4000 was allocated for these workshops without much discussion about competing needs, and a number of workshops were held. But turnout was small -- about 30 parents to begin with from a school of 700 kids, fading off to 10. One teacher felt that unforeseen changes in the PTA hurt an otherwise good program: the president took a full-time job and had to quit and several others started college courses and cut back their involvement. But other staff felt that their efforts and investment were unrewarded and their idea a bust.

Subcommittee efforts to improve school climate were also unsuccessful. The chief project was an effort to start a school newspaper, but, one team member reported, "That didn't get off the ground." More important, interest in such efforts was engulfed by serious morale problems relating to school discipline. Concern about how to turn the situation around took over any other discussion of climate. As one teacher put it, "There's terrible, terrible discipline here." According to another, "A lot of people are dissatisfied with the administration's response to discipline problems. They feel they are not getting enough backup and support, that the principal is not visible enough, that when a child is sent to the principal he gets 'a jelly bean and a pat on the head.'" The principal herself acknowledged these problems and repeated the "jelly bean complaint," saying in her own defense that those same teachers who wanted her to be tougher with the kids nevertheless appreciated her gentle style when she worked with them.

These concerns about discipline led to the formation of subcommittees on the lunchroom and on a discipline code. There was also talk of creating a position for a dean of discipline or a "cool off" room. More important, the discipline problem was raised for discussion in an after-school faculty meeting for all staff (itself an idea of the ST/T

committee) and was made the central concern of the ST/T committee's all-school retreat.

Voices raised at the retreat were not always easy to hear, and the staff became polarized, not only between those with differing discipline philosophies, but between white and black staff. In particular, according to one participant, "Some of the black teachers said that the white teachers don't treat the kids with respect, and that some discipline problems occur because the teachers can't understand the kids." In the words of a black teacher, "This is a good school, but many of the teachers have been here a long time and see the changes in the kids and don't know what to do -- not that the young teachers do." As the principal summarized it, the real problem was that the school was suffering a classic conflict between a middle class teacher corps and a lower class community, compounded, in her view, by the fact that "Black teachers seem to think they have ownership of the kids because of their color. They feel the white teachers need to be sensitized to the kids' needs more. They don't realize they're middle class too."

It would be accurate to say, then, that Deeter Elementary was struggling to create a positive climate for its students and for its staff, who were upset with the situation and confused about what to do. Sharply differing approaches were being put forth. Some black teachers were hurt and angry at what they saw as racism, while some white teachers were hurt and angry at what they saw as inappropriate criticism.

However, these same developments can be framed more positively. First, as mentioned previously, one of the offshoots of the ST/T committee was an agreement on the part of the principal to reinstitute regular whole-school staff meetings, a very positive move according to those interviewed. It was in that forum that the climate and discipline issues were raised. Second, it was at the initiative of the ST/T committee that these issues were carried from the faculty meeting to the all-school retreat, at which the issue of racism surfaced. So it can also be said that one effect of SDM was the creation of new structures that served to bring staff concerns and troublesome conflicts to public discussion. One wishes that Deeter Elementary School staff were more at peace with the kids, the principal, and each other. But if problems do exist, then one cannot ask more than that the school structure provide forums for raising them, thus creating the possibility of intentional, systemic change.

Some felt that a few speakers at the retreat had become frustrated and "said things they were sorry to have said." According to one respondent, "A lot of people" felt that "the retreat should have allowed far more people to speak their feelings." The key, according to the principal, was that "We're trying to deal with the problems." The chapter leader confirmed this, pointing out, "We are beginning to break ground with the conflict over discipline. Teachers are talking together on the committee." As another teacher put it, "We all know where we want to go, not how to get there. Some favor punishment, some negotiation and staff training. But I really feel we're coming together on this." The tone, then, of all those interviewed was a realistic positivism that acknowledged significant problems without bitterness or defeatism, and looked instead to the SDM process as having

fostered discussions that could help them overcome conflict and move ahead.

Effects of the Restructuring Effort

The most immediate, and perhaps even the most important effects were on the participants themselves. One of the first committee members stated it most powerfully: "I am so grateful. I was hopeless before, and I have felt better about myself and this school since this began. The training was wonderful because I came out with hope. It can work; it can make more people positive." This was echoed by another teacher who had joined the committee much later: "I heard about the committee and went to a few meetings. At first my interest was selfish -- I thought maybe I could keep a record of the meetings as part of my master's thesis -- but then the meetings just *felt* right, and I became involved and joined the committee. I feel better. I feel good. I feel like I'm doing something for the entire school, I'm really doing something."

In addition, the participants noted changes in each other: "The program works to open us up, to realize we're all doing the same thing, to ask for help, to share." The chapter leader noted, beyond that, that teachers on the committee had become much more free in voicing their opinions: "They're no longer silenced by fear of negative repercussions; they realize that the principal is at least willing to listen to them." And, she added, the principal had become more receptive to staff ideas: "At first her support was more verbal than actual and she had to be pushed to make changes in response to staff ideas; now she is really trying to meet our concerns." The principal, of course, had a somewhat different point of view: "People still look to me to make the decisions and it *is* hard for me to contain myself. Sometimes I just try to absent myself from a meeting because I could still be controlling and manipulating without meaning to or really knowing it."

And finally, there were effects on the larger school community. Most basically, the first project attempted -- departmentalized reading in the second grade -- was seen to be working. Beyond that, said another respondent, many teachers in the other grades became interested in the concept, and the sixth grade teachers picked it up on their own.

More broadly, the school as a whole was positively affected by the SDM process. "They see us out there trying to be positive and it affects them,"said one committee member. Another agreed: "On the retreats we'd get together after the meetings and talk about our lives and families. We saw each other in ways we hadn't had time for in the school day, and that helped break through what we'd seen as differences separating us." A third said, "Knowing each other better as people really helps us work together better. We're feeling better about each other. We realize we're all trying to get to the same goal." Moreover, the principal noted not only the same general increase in morale, but an increase in professionalism as well: "More teachers are willing to come to a meeting held at lunchtime, whereas before they would have absented themselves because that was their free time 'by right;' and more teachers are coming to PTA meetings without my having to orchestrate it. They are buying into the projects suggested by the committee because the committee

identified real concerns."

What Are You Learning?

Thoughts on learning fell into two categories, reflections on the *process* they were engaged in and reflections on *personal learning*. Some reflections were pessimistic: "Change is very difficult, and takes a lot of time and energy," said one, while another added, "If this is going to succeed it will need a great deal of commitment by a large number of people, and everyone has to be willing to at least accept what we are trying to do." The principal observed ways in which the ST/T process had shown the teachers in a new light: "I'm seeing new dimensions -- commitment, strengths, fears. It used to be that I'd know, and judge a person on, whether she kept a quiet and neat classroom and whether she was timely in meeting responsibilities. Now I'm seeing people who can handle people, people who have a bigger commitment to kids, people who have a vision I can share." And, finally, some team members were very positive: "Positive effects will lead to even more. People will buy in," said one, while another noted, "We can knock down obstacles. We can trust each other a little more." Further, one can note in the principal's observation that the restructuring effort had shifted her focus away from qualities instrumental to the smooth running of a bureaucracy (quietness, neatness, promptness) and toward qualities instrumental to good education (commitment, vision, the ability to handle people).

Reflections on personal learning included concrete skills learned, such as "How to work well in a committee and run a meeting, how to hear other people better," and "How to speak better in front of people." Other members made more general observations: "People are *very* different than you had thought them to be: their personalities are different in different contexts," said one, while another pointed out, "There are different ways of teaching, different styles, and no one has to have *the* right way." Finally, one member commented, "I'm learning more about myself, about my need to control and where I have trouble changing," while another shared similar insights: "I'm learning that I can speak what I feel."

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

Those interviewed at Deeter focused on only three problem areas: *start up problems, insufficient time,* and *ongoing problems with staff morale.* Comments on start-up problems noted both technical and emotional difficulties: "There were initial problems with people on the committee not willing to voice their opinions, not really willing to be part of the process. But this has largely been overcome," said one. Another agreed: "There was a problem of fear and mistrust of others: 'Can I *really* say what I want?'" A third commented, "We had trouble coming to an agreement, until we learned some new techniques from the facilitators." Comments about insufficient time included, "People like the idea of SDM and want to see it in place, but they will not give up their own time -- lunches, prep periods, before school -- for meetings. Even for those willing to meet, time is a problem. It's hard to find a time

when we all can meet, and there is just never enough time to finish it all." Another team member noted, "There's a problem of asking teachers to stay after 3:00. We do it because of our commitment, but I don't know how many times we can ask the others to do it." Finally, several team members commented on morale problems, caused, one said, by "The perception that certain teachers get more than others." Another said, "There's polarization in the staff between people who have different backgrounds and different ideas about discipline." A third observed, "Nay-sayers who worry about everything are an obstacle, and people looking for instant results who don't realize that process is what counts, and people who see the committee as 'teachers who are in with the principal' and who therefore *still* see this as another principal's project." And another noted, "Negative people who say, 'We've done all this before,' and who won't help -- but now more have bought in, at least for the ride, and they aren't bad-mouthing us as much."

What More Is Needed?

In general, answers to this question fell into three categories: first, everyone saw the need for *increased resources*. Some needs were concrete: "We need more books and classroom supplies and things to have in the room," observed one, while another added, "We need money to bring in training in peer mediation and conflict resolution [for the project to improve school discipline]." A third said, "We need money for substitutes. As it is now, the whole committee can never meet together during the school day." Others saw the need for more abstract resources, such as time: "We need more time, period," said one, while another saw the need for more freedom: "We need to be able to plan a budget without strings or categories and without having money just dumped on us by the district. The school must be managed at the school level."

Second, people saw the need for *more knowledge*: "We need more expertise and knowledge about conflict resolution and peer mediation, about implementing a primary ungraded unit, and about getting the parents more involved," noted one team member, while another said, "It would be good if the teachers not on the committee got the training we had in conflict resolution and in recognizing our own biases." A third added, "We need people to come in from the other schools to compare notes." And another suggested, "It would be good to begin the year before the kids come with an institute for a week for everyone, paid."

Third, perhaps influenced by the glow of the retreat, several teachers voiced a need for *more access to each other*: "People have to be able to get together. You don't even need a retreat: conferences or suppers will do," said one, while another added, "Let's have more staff activity, even if it's only a Friday afternoon in the gym."

Mary Beth Smith Elementary School
The Bronx

Context

The Smith Elementary School neighborhood was in the heart of the South Bronx, an area with a national reputation for poverty and social devastation. There had been a significant investment in rehabilitation in the last few years, so one no longer saw block after block of gutted buildings, empty lots, and staring window holes. But the poverty remained.

The school building was big, "five floors and no elevator," looming over the small apartment buildings and old three-story flats of the streets beside it. The surrounding neighborhood was dominated by huge apartment blocks, most of them empty but undergoing rehabilitation. This was the old, poor inner city, the city of perpetual immigration and exodus, dangerous streets, terrible housing, and public assistance.

The school had had quite a history. Built to serve a neighborhood of Jewish and Irish immigrant workers, it had been washed by every social wave the city had accepted. It reached its peak, the interviewer was told, in 1972 when it served 1200 kids, and the long sheds across the street were built to house the sixth grade. It had gone down from there "with the devastation of the neighborhood" to about 800-900 kids, and down further under a principal who had eventually been arrested on a narcotics charge. It was now under a new principal, and back up to 1300 pupils, mostly black and Hispanic, and mostly poor.

"I doubt any school could be worse," said one teacher who had been there nearly 30 years and who had grown up in the neighborhood. She had known the school when it was "a very fine school, with a similar population." The problem, she asserted, was that for many years, the school had been used by the district as a dumping ground for incompetent teachers and paraprofessionals. During most of this time, it had suffered the totally incompetent nonleadership of an alcoholic and absentee principal. He had been replaced, following an arrest and conviction for buying crack, but the dumping, she said, had continued under the temporary trustee stewardship and under the new principal. The current principal, she said, used to be the assistant principal in charge of fifth and sixth grades: "He's OK. He can be tough. He holds people accountable, and they don't like him for it. He knows how to intimidate. But he's not very personable and he never listens to teachers' suggestions."

The school's chief problem, said the same teacher, is that, "In the last three years *anyone* who could get out, left. I'd leave myself if I could keep this job in a different school. We have the dregs, and it's depressing. When you don't have it from the top, everything goes. A lot of people say that to have the school ever work again you'd have to fire 98% of the people." Said another teacher, almost as bitter: "I'd get rid of half the staff

if I was in power." She gestured in disgust at a case in point, two paraprofessionals sharing a snack and some laughing gossip at a time (9:15) when, she claimed, they long since should have been with their classes. Even the most positive respondent, the chapter leader, said only, "Some teachers will work with the committee staff."

Still, for all this bitterness, what impressed the visitor was the physical typicality and the procedural normality of this battered building. The office was staffed by the usual types; the halls were filled by semi-orderly files of kids shepherded by young women; and a security guard asked an errant loner why she wasn't somewhere else. The piano banged and echoed and the PA system boomed, as five classes of tiny people filed out of the auditorium. A kindergarten class was as crowded as a thrift shop with books and toys and constructions and blocks and signs, stacked, shelved, stuck to the walls, and hanging from the light fixtures. Neatly packaged men carrying clipboards and bullhorns discussed the mechanics of shifting the schedule and moving this group or that so as to free up one room or another. The basic business of schooling was all going on in the usual ways. At most, one noticed that the paint was more scarred and the walls more marked up, the staff more tense and some faces grim, and the kids a little louder and less orderly than in some other schools one had visited.

Focus of the ST/T Project

According to the chapter leader, the ST/T committee was made up of 12 people selected by grade committees from a larger pool of volunteers. Others came on board later. One was "approached by several people so I thought I'd check it out. I saw there were some who were really trying to make a difference. There was no way to know when anything would result, but at least they were trying." Another said simply that she was invited by the chapter leader to join, and that she stayed because "they want to change everything around, they want to make quality education, they want to make plans and see them implemented."

Following the initial training, the committee conducted a face-to-face poll of the entire staff to find out their priorities and then voted to identify the major concerns. Chief among these was the problem of discipline at lunchtime, so the committee next put out a flyer asking for ideas. Many of these suggestions were then implemented, including volunteer teachers supervising the kids' move to the lunchroom, supervision in the lunchroom by some teachers and parents, supervised play in the yard, and the institution of a routine for lunchtime trips to the bathroom.

Three other concerns that were addressed were staff development in classroom management, the establishment of a smoking policy for staff, and a process through which out-of-class teachers could be invited into other teachers' classes as "buddy-buddies" [their term] to give help.

However, contradictory information was supplied by two teachers who had joined the committee in its second year. One said, "There's no project started yet. The main focus is

discipline and there have been some ideas but no practice yet -- at least among most teachers." Another, even more negative, stated, "I see a lot of good ideas discussed but I don't see enough strong people to implement them and I don't see that anything constructive has come from the discussion. I'm not sure it will. They have very little to offer." For her, even the committee itself was tainted: "Some of them, I don't know why they're there. Really, how can they talk about restructuring when they're so unprofessional themselves?"

Nevertheless, another teacher said, "The team is pretty good. People throw out different ideas and talk together and no one person dominates." Said the chapter leader: "All of us work hard. There's good cooperation. There's no such thing as a person in charge."

Effects of the Restructuring Effort

Evaluations of the projects' effects ran a similar gamut from the negative to the quite positive. One said, "The effects have been minuscule, and overwhelmed by everything else," while another disagreed, saying, "We reach out to others. We have an energetic staff which is willing to learn. Word of mouth is going to carry it. More and more are coming to our meetings." Two teachers pointed to small, concrete gains: "I'm getting some new ideas, like the strategy of gradual accomplishment where you create a vision, identify an objective, and then implement steps," and "The principal is at least willing to listen to the committee, and he *never* accepts a suggestion from a teacher otherwise."

Even more positively, the principal pointed to improvements in general morale, which he traced to the committee's work: "It used to be that a teacher would take care of only her own kids in the hall. Now I see teachers paying attention to any kid who needs it. The kids are better mannered and I'm seeing more concern shown in other ways, like by a teacher volunteering to take a kid home, where it used to be that I'd have to make the request myself and even then I'd get only grudging acceptance." Best of all, the Parent Association president stated definitively, "The children are calmer. I have two here and now I'm more willing to let them out to play in the yard after school because I'm less afraid they'll get wild and be hit by a car. And they love coming to school. They're the ones who get me up in the morning to be sure we're here on time."

The committee sponsored a whole-school retreat on a Saturday, which received varying reviews. One teacher stated approvingly that "more than 40 people came [out of 125 teachers and paraprofessionals], even a parent!" But another stated only that, "The retreat was a little encouraging." The chapter leader's version was that, "The retreat was *excellent.* I give it an A-plus. Everyone was working together in a cohesive whole. They became more of a person to each other, more of a family -- and people will do more for their family."

What Are You Learning?

The interviewer was given the opportunity to ask only two respondents what they were learning. One said, "I'm learning nothing yet...but I'm watching." The other was pessimistic: "The *idea* of the ST/T project is a good idea, better than the idea of everything being run from the central board, but you have to be careful that people aren't doing it just for their own purposes. I think only some of them are interested in the school."

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

The interviewer was given the opportunity to ask this question of only two respondents. One said, "The biggest problem is the people on the staff. The powers that be won't do anything to improve things, no matter what reports are written. I wish I could say I felt optimistic, but I don't. I've joined the committee, but...the people in charge of everything [the district and the union leadership] don't do anything." The other also targeted the staff as the chief barrier to change: "We don't have too many teachers I'd want to go to to help me restructure."

What More Is Needed?

According to one respondent, "The district, and the union, have to do something about the people in the school. No one in the district has attempted to improve this school, and if I don't see improvement by next year I'm off the committee." According to another teacher, "We need knowledge and technical assistance, we need more staff cooperation with the administration. We need more parent involvement. They don't come out after K-1."

Marcus Cincinnati Elementary School
Richmond Hill

Context

The school rose like a huge pink sugar cube above its immediate neighborhood of spacious Victorian houses. But two blocks away was the elevated train and a darker, denser, less comfortable way of life. It was a neighborhood "in transition," we were told. What had once been a stable, largely middle class area of single-family homes now had two, three, or even four families in many houses; the families were rarely middle class; and many were new to this country. As a result, the school had gone from about 650 to 900 students in just three or four years, had had to deal for the first time with high student turnover, mixed cultures, a multiplicity of native languages ("More than 20 -- from Urdu to Russian," as one teacher put it), and varying degrees of socialization. More immediately, the school was in one of those districts receiving publicity for alleged corruption, leading everyone to worry about fallout. And the current year's changing demographics had led to "the worst start-up of a school year we've ever had -- starting five new classes between September and December."

Nevertheless, the building was clean and peaceful, and the staff did not show any of the tension and ambivalent class prejudices that might have flowed from a rapid influx of lower class students. Among those interviewed there was a reiteration of the shared goal of helping kids and a covert sense of being part of a team effort within an orderly building.

But, according to the principal, the school was increasingly failing to meet the needs of its kids, and he was frustrated because his staff did not seem to be responding:

> I welcomed the ST/T project wholeheartedly because I had been trying to do this for years. My message had been, "We are not meeting the needs of the kids. I am not critical of what you are doing, but we have to look at that." This fell on deaf ears, I felt. The project was a way to get people to face the reality of what we had and what had to be done.

Thus, despite acknowledged problems, some strategic errors in start up, and a couple of significant stumbles, an ST/T project was up and running. By all reports, it had a highly positive effect on morale and professionalism. Interview respondents were single-voiced in praise of one another -- with the significant exception of a person they described as "a troublemaker," "a blocker," and "a career obstructionist," who had been a thorn in their sides until he chose to leave for another job. They felt they shared common values and they spoke about them in common ways: "This is a school that cares about kids," said one.

Another agreed: "People here put the children first." Still another said, "People really have the children's interests at heart." They felt accepted and included by the SDM process. "This is a place with open communication," said one team member. Another added, "You just say what's on your mind." A third agreed: "No one is afraid to say what they feel." And another said, "It feels good because you always get listened to."

Perhaps most important, participants had come to know each other in ways not allowed by the normal school structure. "Some of the very *best* things come out of the noneducators," observed a teacher, while another said, "This is the first committee I've been on which had parents involved. It's nice to have their input." Another parent agreed: "As a parent, it felt good to be asked to be involved, particularly when we went on retreat and I saw that no other schools had parents involved." Another teacher observed, "I saw the rest of the staff in a different way than before and I've made a lot of friendships." Another agreed: "We have a lot of things to talk about." And still another said, "My colleagues have a lot to offer, and I have a lot to learn."

Focus of the ST/T Project

The principal, as previously mentioned, had welcomed the ST/T process as a means to help the staff become more responsive to the school's changing population and more professional. The chapter leader had roots going back to the AFT's Hammond, Indiana, project and saw shared decision making as decidedly positive despite the difficulties it can cause. "Some teachers are very fearful of any change -- having maybe to do something different," the chapter leader noted. Each appeared to be a strong personality, acknowledged and complimented the other on his/her leadership, and seemed used to working together.

The principal and chapter leader decided that Cincinnati Elementary would submit a ST/T proposal; they wrote it without consulting others and handpicked the members of the committee (ten teachers, a paraprofessional, two parents, the principal, and the assistant principal). They were careful to choose activists with widely differing spheres of influence. "They said, 'You'll volunteer, won't you,' and kinda twisted our arms. We didn't really know what we were getting into, what 'restructuring' really meant, or how much *time* it would all take," observed one team member.

The committee met, was introduced to the proposal for the first time, and decided to practice consensual politics rather than voting. The members shared vision statements with each other and gathered them from people not on the committee. After grouping these under four "areas of concern," they decided to focus on helping at-risk students in the early grades, chose "heterogeneous grouping" as the appropriate implementation of this vision, and were delegated to involve their various constituencies in the next steps of the process.

By March 1989, these various thrusts had led to anger, frustration, and a sense that they were failing each other and failing the school. First, the "closed" selection process for committee membership had led to various fears and objections among the wider staff. Even

the members of the committee started with doubts as to others' motives for membership, as one said: "Maybe they were there to feather their own nests, you know?" In addition, the staff as a whole saw the committee members as elitist: "They thought we had more power than we did, and that we wanted more," noted one member.

As a consequence, communication had been poor or lacking. Within the committee, people had misunderstood, been confused by, and even taken offense at others' statements, but had not sought clarification or shared their feelings. Committee members had not done an effective job of bringing in their constituents. There were significant objections to heterogeneous grouping among the parents and some staff. The project was stalled.

Things came, or were brought, to a head in March 1989 at the weekend retreat. According to a facilitator's log, "The retreat started out like *gangbusters*. The Marcus Cincinnati team saw the agenda and said, 'There is going to be a revolt.' They were emphatic in stating, 'We have a plan. We want to write it and we don't want to go to any of those sessions.'" Subsequently, the team came to see some of their problems and negative experiences as shared by other teams and lost some of their sense of alienation. They nevertheless requested time by themselves alone (three hours on Saturday afternoon) outside of the regular schedule, and the request was granted.

At that session, referred to glowingly by those interviewed, the team's own communication problems were aired for the first time and worked out. "Everyone felt uninformed, ill informed," commented one. Another said, "The problem was just in how things were being interpreted." A third added, "We needed the chance to yell and scream together." Another pointed out, "People were *crying*, and you could tell they really cared." Still another observed, "People aren't always saying what you think at first, so I've learned to listen better, because their concerns are legitimate."

In addition, the team apparently recognized its failure to consult with other staff members and moved to rectify this. "Team members did not adequately communicate to the rest of the school what was going on and really didn't solicit feedback from them," observed one, while another added, "We made a mistake at first in not letting others know enough about what we were discussing, so we've tried harder to communicate." This change was too much of a pendulum swing according to the principal, who said: "There was a lack of extensive communication, a trading of personal points of view -- so now they're hung up on communication and want to communicate *everything;* they don't see themselves as yet as a decision-making group."

Maintaining their determination to select a single, concrete focus of their vision, the team next offered the "whole language approach" as a possible ST/T project. Readings were passed out, training was offered and accepted, and a whole language approach was adopted by four teachers in two grades starting in September 1989 with others probably to follow.

Some felt that determination to arrive at a concrete result within a specified time

frame did violence to the group's collaborative process: "During our discussion," wrote a facilitator, "the team came to the realization that they had not really participated in a restructuring process." Some felt that the administration had been too quiescent in the committee meetings: "Some things should be just left to them; the principal knows better than I; there should be more administrative decisions," said one team member. Some felt that the non-administrators were too passive: "I know how to give but I can't find anyone willing to take. No one has been willing to take leadership of the committee," said one, and another agreed: "There are people on the committee who are afraid to share all our thinking with the staff." Still others felt that the "rotating group leadership" had been superb. But a project was chosen and implemented; and all interviewees approved it and felt it to be well implemented and a good expression of their original vision.

Ultimately, the committee made the decision to reconstitute itself under the Chancellor's guidelines for becoming an SBM/SDM school. This necessitated a 75% approval vote and the selection of SBM/SDM committee members; the ST/T team -- still smarting from earlier charges of "elitism" and spurred by the negativism of one particular teacher, had bogged down in frustrating and seemingly endless arguments about how to move forward. In the principal's words, "The team *would not* come up with a selection process to govern who and how members would come on the SBM/SDM committee. Finally I did it despite my continued reservations about taking a forceful leadership role, and the risk that I would be seen as interfering in the collaborative process."

The principal's SBM/SDM proposal was approved by the committee and submitted to the staff for a vote. 94% voted in favor of it. But then a "rump group" of teachers raised its head and made loud objections to the selection process for the SBM/SDM committee, arguing, among other things, that they had not read the proposal closely and had not realized what they were voting for. Their complaint, apparently, concerned the allocation of representatives to constituencies. This objection *after* a vote caused the principal much pain, as he felt that once you have violated the process -- such as a vote -- then you really have nothing left. The chapter leader saw it differently: "I knew we had to go with it, honor the group's objections, and hold a new election for committee membership, so I just stepped in and unilaterally arranged it. I doubt we'd have a team now if I hadn't done it."

The election was held, and the new committee was constituted. Membership was largely the same as the original, handpicked ST/T team but there were a few additional members -- one being the "blocker" previously mentioned. "We got him elected," according to one of the original ST/T team members, "as a means of stopping his objections to the committee." However, this powerful and negative person dominated committee meetings throughout the fall and winter. "He really didn't understand the process, that our purpose was to pick a project. He wanted more control over different things in the school, more than we were prepared to discuss. He was not trained, like we were," observed another team member. But beyond this person's role, another commented, "It was hard to bring the four new people onto the committee. The meetings were rough and you left them feeling angry and negative, like, 'Why are we even bothering?', which we hadn't felt before. You were

used to your own little group, and they didn't understand what was expected."

But the "blocker" left the school and the committee found its star again. They had one good meeting following the string of "bad" ones, were looking to pick their next project, and were guardedly hopeful that the bad times were behind them. "Change gets people upset sometimes," observed one team member wryly.

Effects of the Restructuring Effort

Listening to responses to this question was like taking a conducted tour through the fulfilled promises and hopes of current writers about school reform. The two or three teachers originally involved in the whole language approach had grown to about 20; they had formed a Whole Language Committee and met on their own during lunchtime. More important, their energy and "ownership" had spread widely throughout the staff: the principal felt that now half the faculty would read articles he brought in, whereas they used to be ignored. He saw people making unsolicited curricular suggestions, people asking to be sent to conferences, asking for the opportunity to give up a day of their own time in order to learn something new. As he put it, "People are beginning to talk publicly and professionally about the process of educating children. We've now got a literary magazine, not because I wanted it (though I did) and pushed it, but because someone came up with the idea and made it happen. And someone came to me with an RFP and suggested we apply, and we are. That's never happened before because people always waited for me to lead." He added, "People are starting to think beyond 8-to-3. The committee has decided that the best time to meet is on Fridays from 3 to 5. That really says something, because even on your best week you're looking forward to going home then."

A teacher agreed: "I can't remember people talking about something educational in the lunchroom. Now they do." Another said, "We're planning a workshop to take place after the school year, that's *after the school year!*" Still another observed, "It's brought the teachers doing the program closer together. Ideas and suggestions are brought in and talked about. That's almost contagious, and there's now a lot more feeling of camaraderie in everyone, even those not doing the whole language approach. People are speaking up and saying what they think and feel. There's a lot more professional atmosphere." Another said, "The whole atmosphere in the school has changed. People would go in their rooms and close their doors; now they do that but there'll be two or three other teachers in there too talking over ideas and offering resources." And still another noted, "People are willing to work together to do things here, and I think that's really important."

Not that these gains were unalloyed, particularly for the teachers most directly involved in the new approach, as one said: "Those teachers are working *very* hard because whole language is a lot more difficult. Some are frustrated, because materials are sometimes hard to get and class size is too big. But it *is* working for the children." Another commented, "Maybe they didn't really understand how hard it would be to keep choosing curriculum as your group changes; maybe they still wish there could be a manual." "It's

another program with good intentions," said the principal, "that requires a tremendous amount of giving by the individual."

What Are You Learning?

There was a noticeable pause before people answered this question, as though perhaps they were still so enmeshed in the daily struggles of furthering their projects and mastering new processes that they had not reflected on what they were learning. Then, when the answers did come, they did not come with the flow and spill of detail that appeared elsewhere, but had a somewhat stilted quality. Perhaps the other questions drew on thoughts that naturally occurred to people while the question, "What am I learning?" did not.

Their thoughts on learning fell into two categories. First, there were reflections on the *process* they were engaged in. "Restructuring, looking at the long term effects of something that you hope will be, was a great idea," said one, while another observed, "Consensus is OK, but it takes some getting used to." A third noted, "I learned we have an ongoing need for facilitators. After the first year we thought we knew it all, but we still need their help." Another said, "I had felt maybe they were trying to brainwash us, but now I see we're closer together, I see people as human beings." Still another said, "We're learning how to deal with different personalities, how to work together as a group. If you want someone to come around to your point of view there's a way to approach them. I never had call to deal this way before being on the committee."

Second, there were reflections on *personal learning*. "I've learned to listen better, and that it's OK to say that I need help," said one. "I'm learning," said the principal, "that I can distance myself from the decision-making process and that I can be comfortable with that; I can share. I gain in effectiveness. I'm learning more about myself as a leader. And I've learned that the staff are capable and willing to learn more if they are included in the process. The 'ownership' thing is true here." "I'm learning," said the chapter leader, "that both [the principal and I] have had to step back to let others emerge to grab the reins."

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

Three dilemmas stood out: first, there were *start-up problems*. Some of these were due to problems of mistrust and miscommunication as parents joined with teachers and teachers joined with teachers in ways neither group had experienced before. "Communication problems within the committee, learning to work together as a group was hard. At one point a teacher turned to one of the parents and said, 'That's a point even *you* can understand,' and we were all very embarrassed," observed one team member, while another noted, "I thought that maybe [the other teachers on the committee] were there to feather their own nests, you know?" Other problems were due to mistrust felt by teachers not on the committee toward teachers on the committee. "The rest of the teachers thought we had more power than we did, and that we wanted more," said a team member. Finally,

some problems were due to the simple confusion felt by anyone involved in a process that requires learning by doing. "The facilitators need more training in how to deal with group dynamics. Some were stronger than others, but other times we suffered," said one, while another added, "My main criticism is that they required us to learn a process and produce a specific product at the same time. So people were holding back, because you have to have an overall understanding of what you are doing." A third noted, "We need to understand SBM and what our duties are. It's like working in the dark, looking for the light. Sometimes we don't understand what we're looking for."

Second, there were *ongoing differences of opinion* between those who wanted more direction from the facilitators, or more direction by the principal, or less direction by the principal. "The facilitators don't control the meetings the way they should be controlled. They should be more forceful," said one. Another disagreed: "I feel we are moving too slowly sometimes. There should be more administrative decisions." The principal commented, "I feel like I'm still leading the group more than I want to, and worse, I don't feel they resent it. The Chancellor's requirements call for a chairman other than the principal, and that will be good." A teacher observed, "Some teachers still feel the principal should make final decisions on everything. They don't really understand this new committee plan coming from the Chancellor."

Third, there were the dilemmas of having *insufficient resources* to do the job people wanted to do. "There's not enough time, not enough resources like trainers and people to cover for others in training, not enough materials. People are meeting on their lunchtime! We need more follow-up resources," observed one, while another lamented, "I don't know how we will ever be able to afford to do whatever it is we decide needs to be done." A third agreed: "We're going to have problems like budgeting and class size because of the [New York Public Schools] system. It's not designed to make this the easiest job possible."

What More Is Needed?

As mentioned above, respondents indicated a variety of needs -- most particularly a need for more *time* to get together to do their work and a need for more *resources* to support their chosen projects. Beyond that, requests fell into two categories. First, there was a unanimous desire for more contact with other ST/T participants. "We need more time on retreat to talk to one another, and to other people involved in the process," said one. The principal agreed: "I'd like to meet and talk with the other 11 heads of schools." A third suggested, "Maybe we could have a workshop with just one other school, and each of the groups -- parents, teachers, administrators -- could get together and talk." Second, there was a general recognition that more training of almost any sort would be useful. "We need more workshops," said one, echoed by another: "We could be given more teaching about what a group does and how it does it." Suggested a third: "We need trainers on call, within, say at least a month." Another added, "We need continued facilitation. There are problems of space and of lack of expertise." Still another said, "We need more organized help, more workshops, information, training, moral support."

The Facilitators

Each participating school received assistance from a team of two or three facilitators selected from among experienced Teacher Centers Consortium (TCC) specialists. Each facilitator team worked with one school in the ST/T project while continuing to meet other TCC responsibilities. In all, 29 facilitators were selected to assist the 12 ST/T schools.

The ST/T facilitators were all experienced teachers in the New York City schools, and all possessed considerable expertise in one or more content areas, such as writing or cooperative learning. In their TCC roles, they typically consulted and acted as resources to individual teachers, conducted demonstration lessons, and led workshops. Nearly all of them were white women in their 40s. In the original group of 29, there had been no people of color and only three or four men. As more facilitators were chosen to staff new projects, the group of 50 or so included seven black women and six white men. They were outgoing, excited by their work, energetic, and articulate.

The facilitators had been prepared for their role through a series of training sessions consisting of an initial orientation followed by five monthly meetings. These workshops were conducted by an outside consultant who introduced them to "process" tools such as force field analysis, used to weigh contributing and restraining forces related to a decision, and carousel brainstorming, used to generate lots of ideas on a given topic.

Focus of the Facilitators' Work

The ST/T facilitators provided assistance to the school teams. They saw their job primarily as working to "provide a neutral presence, an outlet to vent grievances, make time for meetings, make people act better," as well as providing assistance to the school teams with their process. Only secondarily did they act as resources or experts.

The facilitators, working in teams of two or three, helped each school through a process that led to schoolwide restructuring. The job entailed the following:

-- Meeting with a school-based team that included the principal, the chapter leader, a number of teachers, and perhaps a parent, to help the team develop a vision for the school and an action plan for enacting it.

-- Introducing to the team a variety of process tools -- approaches to and means of handling such tasks as running meetings collaboratively, sharing decisions, developing ideas into plans, resolving conflicts.

-- Encouraging the team to work with the whole school so that decisions were

reached somewhat collaboratively among the faculty and were not left to the committee alone.

-- Intervening in discussions to keep the process moving or to raise and resolve problems.

-- Providing suggestions or resources (such as materials or speakers) when needed.

One facilitator said, "My role is to facilitate the process; their [the school's] role is to bring in content." Another said, "There's a difference between making a presentation and turning the work and outcomes over to the participants."

What Are You Learning?

"ST/T was a superb learning experience." The words of one facilitator were echoed by many others. As a group, they learned process skills in group training sessions in the first year of the project. As individuals, each learned different and personal lessons about how to enact the role of a school consultant. Individual learnings revolved around two issues of deep concern to all facilitators: how to be an effective facilitator and what neutrality meant.

The facilitators' job was a complex one, entailing many different, and sometimes contradictory, helping tasks. Like the job of a teacher, it was made up of many on-the-spot judgments about what would work best in a particular situation, decisions that were difficult to prepare for, difficult to summarize, and difficult to evaluate even by the person making them. Many of these activities had layers of meaning, and differing ones for the facilitator and the participants. Providing food for a meeting, deciding whether or not the time was right to ask a question, taking the initiative to provide direction based on research or experience, or deciding to hold back; all had different implications and consequences each time and in each setting.

Within this complexity, the facilitators had many questions and no final answers, but rather a generally shared sense that a facilitator "listens and knows when to jump in, has the strength to jump in and the smarts to wait to know when." The facilitator, said one, "walks a very narrow line between coaching and giving input without being an influencer through giving the opinion." As facilitators, they encouraged and prodded, observed and informed, modeled process techniques, and acted as a resource. The functions of the facilitators were multiple and conflicting; the roles they played were myriad. They had to be not only skilled in a wide range of functions, but also had to know when to use which to best advantage.

The second key learning for facilitators centered around the concept of "neutrality." This involved both one's stance toward the team and its work and one's relationship to the union. As process consultants, their guiding principle was: "We are neutral about the

content [of the change under discussion] and firm about the process." This was sometimes voiced as, "We are going to give you a process, but the content will be yours." In either case, the meaning was that one of the responsibilities of the facilitator was not to impose solutions on a team: "We don't say, 'Go with this program or goals.'" Instead, the facilitators worked to include as many participant perspectives as possible in discussions. At times, this included not only silent support but gatekeeping and even giving voice to unexpressed opinions held by quieter members. Concerning the latter, the facilitators knew that as outsiders they were free from the constraints of local politics and sensitivities and could raise issues that could not be voiced by insiders. As one facilitator put it, "I try to be an objective outsider who says what people are really thinking."

Indeed, the preservation of this neutrality was considered so essential that there was a general feeling that a facilitator ought not to even *offer an opinion* concerning content if the same point could be made by asking the team to reflect on the direction it was taking; better to ask a question than to state directly what one believed: "The team drives the facilitator, not the other way," said one.

However, the facilitators were not entirely comfortable within this corral either: "We facilitate not just the process, but change. If we don't, then those who say we just care about the process are proven *right!*" Another added, "We have to keep in mind that the process is just a tool to get to the product." As a result, they struggled with the role, acknowledging that no human being could ever be entirely neutral, worrying what to do if a team should be leaning toward choices that seemed educationally unsound, conscious that there could be no absolute answers to their dilemma. The role of nondirective facilitator was new to them, and different from the role of directive, guiding teacher specialist.

A further aspect to the facilitators' concern about neutrality stemmed from the fact that they were part of and supported by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), but did not want to be seen as such. Simply because they were part of the UFT, schools sometimes questioned their neutrality. Thus, they were careful to represent all views in the school and not to serve as advocates only for teachers -- even if that meant on occasion keeping silent if they did not like the way a principal's authority was being used. They saw it as their responsibility to win trust, and they seem to have succeeded. One school wrote of its facilitators, "They are not really the union...the Teacher Centers are separate from the union."

Barriers, Ongoing Problems, Dilemmas?

Time and its limitations were raised as a problem by virtually everyone. A related issue, though raised less often, was pressure to succeed. Another category was people problems.

Time. Time was a problem for the ST/T facilitators in several ways. In the first year of the project, there was very little time for reflection on or integration of learnings from the

training or their experiences. Further, although people were engaged in and excited by their work, and although they had accepted the norm that hard work was expected, they still felt that there was too little time to accomplish their goals with the teams.

Moreover, the facilitators felt that hard work alone was not enough, that they were also supposed to show visible success by the end of the first year. Success was not specifically defined but seemed to include team cohesion, defined by one facilitator as, "The team beginning to work together." Another defined this as, "Everyone affected is involved in the process." Other facilitators felt pressured to demonstrate accomplishments, such as passing School-Based Options, developing a vision that the whole school accepted, or deciding on and beginning to implement a new program or form of practice.

Finally, as new projects came in during the second year, on top of current responsibilities that were already difficult to handle, the facilitators felt stretched too thin. They could not be in their schools as often as they had been in the first year, an absence noted by many schools. This made them feel they were somehow failing in their commitments to those schools.

People Problems. People problems arose in many schools. Some of these involved difficult people on the team, others involved divisions among the staff. Several facilitators spoke of problems dealing with people in positions of authority in the school, such as the principal, the assistant principal, or the chapter leader. In one or two instances they felt that the principal did not support truly *shared* decision making, making it clear that he or she would always make the final decision. In some cases, the facilitators noted, this "problem person" had written the application to join the ST/T project, yet still blocked full implementation.

A last problem was the dynamic of cultural and racial diversity, a difficult issue. In two schools, white teachers -- a minority on their school teams -- thought that differences in the team and the school were race-related, but they did not raise these concerns publicly. Facilitators had not, in these instances, been able to "say what they [the team] think secretly." As one facilitator said, "In every school there is factionalization; sometimes it is by race."

What More Is Needed?

Two kinds of support were identified by facilitators: training and peer support. Both had been provided and were valued, but most people wanted more.

Training. The facilitators valued and used the training they received from outside consultants. They used what they had learned with their teams, described the training as "helpful and necessary," and they went on to train new facilitators. The tools they learned had become part of their professional repertoires, a way to make the fuzzy concept of "process" more tangible.

A group of ST/T facilitators conducted a staff retreat for the entire group of roughly 50 facilitators, including newly appointed ones. Many participants commented that "This was the best training we've ever gotten." The facilitators introduced process tools, helpful hints, and discussions of best practice. They were able to refer to their own real-life examples throughout the training, which added to its value.

Facilitators needed ongoing training at different levels of sophistication as they progressed in their work. New facilitators appreciated the training they got from experienced facilitators. Many experienced facilitators felt they would benefit from training on how to integrate their teaching expertise with their belief in being a neutral presence, or on helping teams discuss and deal with issues of diversity and conflict.

Peer Support. Facilitators valued working in a team: "You can't do this job alone," said one. Another agreed: "It is very worthwhile to have each other; [we] can bounce ideas off each other." Most teams spoke of how well they had worked together. Some were like long-married couples: finishing each other's sentences or seamlessly alternating sentences. Others were less close, but nevertheless seemed to value having partners with whom to plan, to think through issues and next steps, to reflect, and to provide perspective.

Facilitators said they would value other kinds of peer support as well, such as group meetings structured for sharing experiences and discussing common concerns. As one facilitator said, "We are 50 jewels. We could interact for so many things -- for making meaning, for support, for reflection, for developing resources for common strands of activities in several schools. Meetings should have a purpose, not an agenda." She was saying that the facilitators could be more of a resource to each other, and in so doing, would contribute more to the goals of the project.

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